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“Like a white streak, Perry breasted the string”
[Page 318]

✓ THE
PURPLE PENNANT

BY
RALPH HENRY BARBOUR

AUTHOR OF "THE SECRET PLAY," "THE LUCKY SEVENTH," ETC.



ILLUSTRATED BY
NORMAN P. ROCKWELL ✓

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THE PURPLE PENNANT

CHAPTER I

FUDGE IS INTERRUPTED

KEYS,'” murmured Fudge Shaw dreamily,
“‘please’—‘knees’—‘breeze’—I’ve used that
—‘pease’—‘sneeze’—Oh, piffle!” His in-
spired gaze returned to the tablet before him and he
read aloud the lines inscribed thereon:

“O Beauteous Spring, thou art, I ween,
The best of all the Seasons,
Because you clothe the Earth with green
And for numerous other reasons.

“You make the birds sing in the trees,
The April breeze to blow,
The Sun to shine——”

“‘The Sun to shine——,’” he muttered raptly,
“‘The Sun to shine’; ‘squeeze’—‘tease’—‘fleas’——
Gee, I wish I hadn’t tried to rhyme all the lines.
Now, let’s see: ‘You make the birds——’”

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“O Fudge! Fudge Shaw!”

Fudge raised his head and peered through the young leaves of the apple-tree in which he was perched, along the side yard to where, leaning over the fence, was a lad of about Fudge's age. The visitor alternately directed his gaze toward the tree and the house, for it was Sunday afternoon and Perry Hull was doubtful of the propriety of hailing his friend in week-day manner.

“Hello, Perry, come on in!” called Fudge. And thereupon he detached the “Ode to Spring” from the tablet, hastily folded it and put it in his pocket. When Perry climbed the ladder which led to the platform some eight feet above the ground Fudge was in the act of closing a Latin book with a tired air.

“What are you doing?” asked Perry. He was a nice-looking chap of fifteen, with steady dark-brown eyes, hair a shade or two lighter and a capable and alert countenance. He swung himself lithely over the rail instead of crawling under, as was Fudge's custom, and seated himself on the narrow bench beyond the books.

“Sort of studying,” answered Fudge, ostentatiously shoving the books further away and scowling distastefully at them. “Where have you been?”

“Just moseying around. Peach of a day, isn't it?”

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It was. It had rained until nearly dinner time, and grass and leaves were still beaded with moisture which an ardent April sun was doing its best to burn away. It was the first spring-like day in over a week of typical April weather during which Clearfield had remained under gray skies. Fudge assented to Perry's observation, but it was to be seen that his thoughts were elsewhere. His lips moved soundlessly. Perry viewed him with surprise and curiosity, but before he could demand an explanation of his host's abstraction Fudge burst forth triumphantly.

"'B-b-bees!'" exclaimed Fudge. (Excitement always caused him to stammer, a fact which his friends were aware of and frequently made use of for their entertainment.) Perry involuntarily ducked his head and looked around.

"Where?" he asked apprehensively.

"Nowhere." Fudge chuckled. "I was just thinking of something."

"Huh!" Perry settled back again. "You're crazy, I guess. Better come for a walk and you'll feel better."

"Can't." Fudge looked gloomily at the books. "Got to study."

"Then I'll beat it."

"Hold on, can't you? You don't have to go yet."

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I—there isn't such an awful hurry." The truth was that Fudge was not an enthusiastic pedestrian, a fact due partly to his physical formation and partly to a disposition contemplative rather than active. Nature had endowed Fudge—his real name, by the way, was William—with a rotund body and capable but rather short legs. Walking for the mere sake of locomotion didn't appeal to him. He would have denied indignantly that he was lazy, and, to do him justice, he wasn't. With Fudge it was less a matter of laziness than discrimination. Give him something to do that interested him—such as playing baseball or football—and Fudge would willingly, enthusiastically work his short legs for all that was in them, but this thing of deliberately tiring oneself out with no sensible end in view—well, Fudge couldn't see it! He had a round face from which two big blue eyes viewed the world with a constant expression of surprise. His hair was sandy-red, and he was fifteen, almost sixteen, years old.

"It's too nice a day to sit around and do nothing," objected Perry. "Why don't you get your studying done earlier?"

"I meant to, but I had some writing to do." Fudge looked important. Perry smiled slightly. "I finished that story I told you about."

"Did you?" Perry strove to make his question

FUDGE IS INTERRUPTED

sound interested. "Are you going to have it printed?"

"Maybe," replied the other carelessly. "It's a pip-pin, all right, Perry! It's nearly fourteen thousand words long! What do you know about that, son? Maybe I'll send it to the *Reporter* and let them publish it. Or maybe I'll send it to one of the big New York magazines. I haven't decided yet. Dick says I ought to have it typewritten; that the editors won't read it unless it is. But it costs like anything. Morris Brent has a typewriter and he said I could borrow it, but I never wrote on one of the things and I suppose it would take me a month to do it, eh? Seems to me if the editors want good stories they can't afford to be so plaguey particular. Besides, my writing's pretty easy reading just as soon as you get used to it."

"You might typewrite the first two or three sheets," suggested Perry, with a chuckle, "and then perhaps the editor would be so anxious to know how it ended he'd keep right on. What are you going to call it, Fudge?"

Fudge shook his head. "I've got two or three good titles. 'The Middleton Mystery' is one of them. Then there's 'Young Sleuth's Greatest Case.' I guess that's too long, eh?"

"I like the first one better."

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"Yes. Then I thought of 'Tracked by Anarchists.' How's that sound to you?"

"'The Meredith Mystery' is the best," replied Perry judicially.

"'Middleton,'" corrected Fudge. "Yep, I guess it'll be that. I told that fellow Potter about it and he said if I'd let him take it he'd see about getting it published in the *Reporter*. He's a sort of an editor, you know. But I guess the *Reporter* isn't much of a paper, and a writer who's just starting out has to be careful not to cheapen himself, you see."

"Will he pay you for it?" asked Perry.

"He didn't say. I don't suppose so. Lots of folks don't get paid for their first things, though. Look at—look at Scott; and—and Thackeray, and—lots of 'em! You don't suppose they got paid at first, do you?"

"Didn't they?" asked Perry in some surprise.

"Oh, maybe Thackeray got a few dollars," hedged Fudge, "but what was that? Look what he used to get for his novels afterwards!"

Perry obligingly appeared deeply impressed, although he secretly wondered what Thackeray *did* get afterwards. However, he forebore to ask, which was just as well, I fancy. Instead, tiring of Fudge's literary affairs, he observed: "Well, I hope they print it for you, anyway. And maybe

FUDGE IS INTERRUPTED

they'll take another one and pay for that. Say, aren't you going out for baseball, Fudge?"

"Oh, I'm going out, I guess, but it won't do any good. I don't intend to sit around on the bench half the spring and then get fired. The only place I'd stand any chance of is the outfield, and I suppose I don't hit well enough to make it. You going to try?"

Perry shook his head. "No, I don't think so. I can't play much. Warner Jones told me the other day that if I'd come out he'd give me a good chance. I suppose he thinks I can play baseball because I was on the Eleven."

"Well, gee, if you could get to first you'd steal all the other bases, I'll bet," said Fudge admiringly. "You sure can run, Perry!"

"Y-yes, and that makes me think that maybe I could do something on the Track Team. What do you think, Fudge?"

"Bully scheme! Go out for the sprints! Ever try the hundred?"

"No, I've never run on the track at all. How fast ought I to run the hundred yards, Fudge, to have a show?"

"Oh, anything under eleven seconds would do, I suppose. Maybe ten and four-fifths. Know what you can do it in?"

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"No, I never ran it. I'd like to try, though."

"Why don't you? Say, I've got a stop-watch in the house. You wait here and I'll get it and we'll go over to the track and——"

"Pshaw, I couldn't run in these clothes!"

"Well, you can take your coat and vest off, can't you? And put on a pair of sneakers? Of course, you can't run as fast, but you can show what you can do. Perry, I'll just bet you anything you've got the making of a fine little sprinter! You wait here; I won't be a minute."

"But it's Sunday, Fudge, and the field will be locked, and—and you've got your lessons——"

"They can wait," replied Fudge, dropping to the ground and making off toward the side door. "We'll try the two-twenty, too, Perry!"

He disappeared and a door slammed. Perry frowned in the direction of the house. "Silly chump!" he muttered. Then he smiled. After all, why not? He did want to know if he could run, and, if they could get into the field, which wasn't likely, since it was Sunday and the gates would be locked, it would be rather fun to try it! He wondered just how fast ten and four-fifths seconds was. He wished he hadn't done so much walking since dinner, for he was conscious that his legs were a bit tired. At that moment in his reflections there came

FUDGE IS INTERRUPTED

a subdued whistle from the house and Fudge waved to him.

“Come on,” he called in a cautious whisper. “I’ve got it. And the sneakers, too.” He glanced a trifle apprehensively over his shoulder while he awaited Perry’s arrival and when the latter had joined him he led the way along the side path in a quiet and unostentatious manner suggesting a desire to depart unobserved. Once out of sight of the house, however, his former enthusiasm returned. “We’ll climb over the fence,” he announced. “I know a place where it isn’t hard. Of course, we ought to have a pistol to start with, but I guess it will do if I just say ‘Go!’” He stopped indecisively. “Gordon has a revolver,” he said thoughtfully. “We might borrow it. Only, maybe he isn’t home. I haven’t seen him all day.”

“Never mind, we don’t need it,” said Perry, pulling him along. “He’d probably want to go along with us, Fudge, and I don’t want any audience. I dare say I won’t be able to run fast at all.”

“Well, you mustn’t expect too much the first time,” warned the other. “A chap’s got to be in condition, you know. You’ll have to train and—and all that. Ever do any hurdling?”

“No, and I don’t think I could.”

“It isn’t hard once you’ve caught the knack of it.

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I was only thinking that if you had plenty of steam you might try sprints and hurdles both. All we'd have to do would be to set the hurdles up. I know where they're kept. Then——”

“Now, look here,” laughed Perry, “I'm willing to make a fool of myself trying the hundred-yard dash, Fudge, but I'm not going to keep you entertained all the rest of the afternoon.”

“All right, we'll just try the hundred and the two-twenty.”

“No, we won't either. We'll just try the hundred. Will those shoes fit me? And oughtn't they to have spikes?”

“Sure, they ought, but they haven't. We'll have to make allowance for that, I guess. And they'll have to fit you because they're all we've got. I guess you wear about the same size that I do. Here we are! Now we'll go around to the Louise Street side; there's a place there we can climb easily.”

CHAPTER II

THE TRY-OUT

THE High School Athletic Field—it was officially known as Brent Field—occupied two whole blocks in the newer part of town. The school had used it for a number of years, but only last summer, through the generosity of Mr. Jonathan Brent, Clearfield's richest and most prominent citizen, had it come into actual possession of the field. The gift had been as welcome as unexpected and had saved the school from the difficult task of finding a new location for its athletic activities. But, unfortunately, the possession of a large tract of ground in the best residential part of the town was proving to have its drawbacks. The taxes were fairly large, repairs to stands and fences required a constant outlay, the field itself, while level enough, was far from smooth, and the cinder track, a make-shift affair at the beginning, stood badly in need of reconstruction. Add to these expenses the minor ones of water rent, insurance on buildings and care-taking and you will

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see that the Athletic Association had something to
think about.

The town folks always spoke of it as "the town," although it was, as a matter of fact, a city and boasted of over seventeen thousand inhabitants—supported the High School athletic events, notably football and baseball, generously enough, but it was already evident to those in charge that the receipts from gridiron and diamond attractions would barely keep the field as it was and would not provide money for improvements. There had been some talk of an endowment fund from Mr. Brent, but whether that gentleman had ever said anything to warrant the rumor or whether it had been started by someone more hopeful than veracious was a matter for speculation. At any rate, no endowment fund had so far materialized and the Athletic Committee's finances were at a low ebb. Two sections of grandstand had been replaced in the fall, and that improvement promised to be the last for some time, unless, as seemed improbable, the Committee evolved some plan whereby to replenish its treasury. Various schemes had been suggested, such as a public canvass of the town and school. To this, however, Mr. Grayson, the Principal, had objected. It was not, he declared, right to ask the citizens to contribute funds for such a purpose. Nor would he allow a

THE TRY-OUT

petition to the Board of Education. In fact, Mr. Grayson as good as said that now that the school had been generously presented with an athletic field it was up to the school to look after it. Raising money amongst the students he had no objection to, but the amount obtainable in that manner was too small to make it worth while. The plan of raising the price of admission to baseball and football from twenty-five cents to fifty was favored by some, while others feared that it would keep so many away from the contests that there would be no profit in it. In short, the Committee was facing a difficult problem and with no solution in sight. And the field, from its patched, rickety, high board fence to grandstands and dressing-rooms, loudly demanded succor. Fudge voiced the general complaint when, having without difficulty mounted the fence and dropped to the soggy turf inside, followed more lithely by Perry Hull, he viewed the cinder track with disfavor. The recent rain had flooded it from side to side, and, since it was lower than the ground about it and had been put down with little or no provision for drainage, inch-deep puddles still lingered in the numerous depressions.

“We can’t practice here,” said Perry.

“Wouldn’t that agonize you?” demanded Fudge.

“Gee, what’s the good of having an athletic field

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if you can't keep it up? This thing is g-g-going to be a regular w-w-white elephant!"

"It looks pretty sippy, doesn't it?" asked Perry. "I guess we'd better wait until it's drier. I don't mind running, but I wasn't counting on having to swim!"

"Maybe it's better on the straightaway," responded Fudge more cheerfully. "We'll go over and see."

As luck had it, it was drier on the far side of the field, and Fudge advanced the plea that by keeping close to the outer board Perry could get along without splashing much. Perry, however, ruefully considered his Sunday trousers and made objections.

"But it isn't mud," urged Fudge. "It's just a little water. That won't hurt your trousers a bit. And you can reef them up some, too. Be a sport, Perry! Gee, I'd do it in a minute if I could!"

"Guess that's about what I'll do it in," said the other. "Well, all right. Here goes. Give me the sneakers."

"Here they are. Guess we'd better go down to the seats and change them, though. It's too damp to sit down here."

So they walked to the grandstand at the turn and Perry pulled off his boots and tried the sneakers on. They were a little too large, but he thought they

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would do. Fudge suggested stuffing some paper in the toes, but as there was no paper handy that plan was abandoned. Perry's hat, coat and vest were laid beside his boots and he turned up the bottoms of his trousers. Then they walked along the track, skirting puddles or jumping over them. Fortunately, they had the field to themselves, thanks to locked gates, something Perry was thankful for when Fudge, discouraging his desire to have the event over with at once, insisted that he should prance up and down the track and warm up.

"You can't run decently until you've got your legs warm and your muscles limber," declared Fudge wisely. "And you'd better try a few starts, too."

So, protestingly, Perry danced around where he could find a dry stretch, lifting his knees high in the manner illustrated by Fudge, and then allowed the latter to show him how to crouch for the start.

"Put your right foot up to the line," instructed Fudge. "Here, I'll scratch a line across for you. There. Now put your foot up to that—your *right* foot, silly! That's your left! Now put your left knee alongside it and your hands down. That's it, only you want to dig a bit of a hole back there for your left foot, so you'll get away quick. Just scrape

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out the cinders a little. All right. Now when I say 'Set,' you come up and lean forward until the weight comes on your front foot and hands; most on your foot; your hands are just to steady yourself with. That's the trick. Now then; 'On your mark!' Wait! I didn't say 'Set!'"

"Oh, well, cut out the trimmings," grumbled Perry. "I can't stay like this forever. Besides, I'd rather start on the other foot, anyway."

"All right; some fellows do," replied Fudge, untroubled, neglecting to explain that he had made a mistake. Perry made the change and expressed his satisfaction.

"That's more like it. Say, how do you happen to know so much about it, Fudge?"

"Observation, son. Now, all right? Ready to try it? Set! . . . Go!"

Perry went, but he stumbled for the first three or four steps and lost his stride completely.

"You had your weight on your hands instead of your feet," commented the instructor. "Try it again."

He tried it many times, at last becoming quite interested in the problem of getting away quickly and steadily, and finally Fudge declared himself satisfied. "Now I'll stand back here a ways where I can start you and at the same time see when you cross the line

THE TRY-OUT

down there. Of course, we ought to have another fellow here to help, but I guess I can manage all right." He set his stop-watch, composed his features into a stern frown and retired some twenty yards back from the track and half that distance nearer the finish line. "On your mark!" called Fudge. "Set! . . . Go!"

Perry sped from the mark only to hear Fudge's arresting voice. "Sorry, Perry, but I forgot to start the watch that time. Try it again."

"That's a fine trick! I had a bully getaway," complained the sprinter. "Make it good this time, Fudge; I'm getting dog-tired!"

"I will. Now, then! On your mark! . . . Set! . . . Go!"

Off leaped Perry again, not quite so nicely this time, and down the wet path he sped, splashing through the puddles, head back, legs twinkling. And, as though trying to make pace for him, Fudge raced along on the turf in a valiant endeavor to judge the finish. Perry's Sunday trousers made a gray streak across the line, Fudge pressed convulsively on the stem of the watch and the trial was over!

"Wh-what was it?" inquired Perry breathlessly as he walked back. Fudge was staring puzzledly at the dial.

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"I made it twelve seconds," he responded dubiously.

"Twelve! And you said I'd ought to do it under eleven!" Perry viewed him discouragedly.

"Well, maybe I didn't snap it just when I should have," said the timer. "It's hard to see unless you're right at the line."

"You must have! I'll bet anything I did it better than twelve. Don't you think I did?"

"Well, it looked to me as if you were going pretty fast," answered Fudge cautiously. "But those trousers, and not having any spikes, and the track being so wet—Gee, but you did get splashed, didn't you?"

"I should say so," replied Perry, observing his trousers disgustedly. "The water even went into my face! Say, let's try it again, Fudge, and you stand here at the finish."

"All right, but how'll I start you?"

"Wave a handkerchief or something?"

"I've got it. I'll clap a couple of sticks together." So Fudge set out to find his sticks while Perry, rather winded, seated himself on the stand. Fudge finally came back with the required articles and Perry declared himself rested and ready for another trial. "I'll clap the sticks together first for you to get set and then for the start. Like this." Fudge illustrated. "Suppose you can hear it?"



“Oif your mark! . . . Set! . . . Go!”



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"Sure." Perry proceeded back to the beginning of the straightaway and Fudge stationed himself at the finish, scuffling a line across the track for his better guidance. Then, while the sprinter was getting his crouch, he experimented with slapping the sticks and snapping the watch at the same instant, a rather difficult proceeding.

"All ready!" shouted Perry, poised on finger-tips and knee.

"All right!" called Fudge in response. He examined his watch, fixed a finger over the stem, took a deep breath and clapped the sticks. Perry set. Another clap and a simultaneous jab at the watch, and Perry was racing down the track. Fudge's eyes took one fleeting look at the runner and then fixed themselves strainedly on the line he had drawn across the cinders. Nearer and nearer came the *scrunch* of the flying sneakers, there was a sudden blur of gray in Fudge's vision and he snapped the watch. Perry turned and trotted anxiously back.

"Well?" he asked.

"Better," replied Fudge. "Of course, the track's awfully slow——"

"How much? Let's see?"

Fudge yielded the watch and Perry examined it. "Eleven and two-fifths!" he shouted protestingly.

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"Say, this thing's crazy! I know mighty well I didn't run nearly so fast as I did the first time!"

"I didn't snap it soon enough the other time," explained Fudge. "Honest, Perry, eleven and two-fifths isn't half bad. Why, look at the slow track and your long trousers——"

"Yes, and they weigh a ton, they're so wet," grumbled Perry. "And so do these shoes. I'm going to try it some time when the track's dry and I've got regular running things on. I suppose eleven and two-fifths *isn't* terribly bad, considering!"

"Bad! It's mighty good," said Fudge warmly. "Why, look here, Perry, if you can do it in that time to-day you can do it nearly a second faster on a dry track and—and all! You see if you can't. I'll bet you you'll be a regular sprinter by the time we meet Springdale!"

"Honest, Fudge?"

"Honest to goodness! To-morrow you put your name down for the Track Team and get yourself some running things. I'll go along with you if you like. I know just what you ought to have."

"I don't suppose I'll really have any show for the team," said Perry modestly. "But it'll be pretty good fun. Say, Fudge, I didn't know I could run as fast as I did that first time. It seemed to me I

THE TRY-OUT

was going like the very dickens! It—it's mighty interesting, isn't it?"

"Yes," replied Fudge, as Perry donned his things. "You don't want to try the two-twenty or the hurdles, do you?"

"I should say not! I'm tuckered out. I'm going to try the two-twenty some day, though. I don't think I'd care about hurdling."

"You can't tell," murmured Fudge thoughtfully.

Later, when they had once more surmounted the fence and were heading toward B Street, Fudge, who had said little for many minutes, observed: "I wonder, Perry, if a fellow wouldn't have more fun with the Track Team than with the Nine. I've a good mind to go in for it."

"Why don't you?" asked Perry, encouragingly eager. "What would you try? Running or—or what?" His gaze unconsciously strayed over his friend's rotund figure.

"N-no," replied Fudge hesitantly. "I don't think so. I might go in for the mile, maybe. I don't know yet. I'm just thinking of it. I'd have to study a bit. Perhaps the weights would be my line. Ever put the shot?" Perry shook his head. "Neither have I, but I'll bet I could. All it takes is practice. Say, wouldn't it be funny if you and I both made the team?"

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"It would be dandy," declared Perry. "Do you suppose there'd be any chance of it?"

"Why not?" asked Fudge cheerfully.

CHAPTER III

THE SHADOW ON THE CURTAIN

THE two boys parted at Main and B Streets, Fudge to loiter thoughtfully southward under the budding maples and Perry to continue briskly on along the wider thoroughfare to where, almost at the corner of G Street, a small yellow house stood in a diminutive yard behind a decaying picket fence. Over the gate, which had stood open ever since Perry had grown too old to enjoy swinging on it, was a square lantern supported on an iron arch. At night a dim light burned in it, calling the passer's attention to the lettering on the front:

No. 7—DR. HULL—OFFICE.

Beside the front door a second sign proclaimed the house to be the abode of Matthew P. Hull, M. D.

Nearby was an old-fashioned bell-pull and, just below it, a more modern button. Above the latter were the words "Night Bell." The house looked

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homelike and scrupulously clean, but evidences of disrepair were abundant. The bases of the four round pillars supporting the roof of the porch which ran across the front were rotting, the steps creaked ominously under Perry's feet and the faded yellow paint was blistered and cracked.

Dr. Hull only rented the house, and the owner, since the retail business district had almost surrounded it and he expected to soon sell, was extremely chary of repairs. Perry's father had lived there so long that he hated the thought of moving. He had grown very fond of the place, a fondness shared to a lesser extent by Mrs. Hull and scarcely at all by Perry. But Dr. Hull's motives in remaining there were not wholly sentimental. He had slowly and arduously accumulated a fair practice and, now that the town was over-supplied with physicians, he feared that a change of location would lose him his clients. Dr. Hull was not an old man, but he was forty-odd and rather of the old-style, and shook his head over the pushing methods of the newcomers. Perry assured him that it would be a good thing if he did lose some of his present practice, since half of it brought him little or no money, and that in a better location he could secure a better class of patients. But Perry wasn't very certain of this, while his mother, who sighed secretly for

THE SHADOW ON THE CURTAIN

a home where the plaster didn't crumble nor the floors creak, had even less faith in the Doctor's ability to begin over again.

Perry glanced through the open door of the tiny waiting room on the left as he hung up his cap and, finding it empty and the further door ajar, knew that his father was out. He went on up the stairs, which complained at almost every footfall, and stole noiselessly down the narrow hall to his own room. His mother's door was closed and this was the hour when, on Sundays, she enjoyed what she termed "forty winks." Perry's room was small and lighted by three narrow windows set close together. While they admitted light they afforded but little view, for beyond the shallow back-yard loomed the side wall of a five-storied brick building which fronted on G Street. Directly on a level with Perry's windows was Curry's Glove factory, occupying the second floor of the building. Below was a bakery. Above were offices; a dentist's, a lawyer's, and several that were empty or changed tenants so frequently that Perry couldn't keep track of them. In winter the light that came through the three windows was faint and brief, but at other seasons the sunlight managed somehow to find its way there. This afternoon a golden ray still lingered on the table, falling athwart the strapped pile of

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school books and spilling over to the stained green felt.

Perry seated himself at the table, put an elbow beside the pile of books and, cupping chin in hand, gazed thoughtfully down into the yard. There was a lean and struggling lilac bush against one high fence and its green leaves were already unfolding. That, reflected the boy, meant that spring was really here again at last. It was already nearly the middle of April. Then came May and June, and then the end of school. He sighed contentedly at the thought. Not that he didn't get as much pleasure out of school as most fellows, but there comes a time, when buds are swelling and robins are hopping and breezes blow warmly, when the idea of spending six hours of the finest part of the day indoors becomes extremely distasteful. And that time had arrived.

Perry turned to glance with sudden hostility at the piled-up books. What good did it do a fellow, anyway, to learn a lot of Latin and algebra and physics and—and all the rest of the stuff? If he only knew what he was going to be when he grew up it might save a lot of useless trouble! Until a year ago he had intended to follow in his father's footsteps, but of late the profession of medicine had failed to hold his enthusiasm. It seemed to him that doctors had to work very hard and long for

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terribly scant returns in the way of either money or fame. No, he wouldn't be a doctor. Lawyers had a far better time of it; so did bankers and—and almost everyone. Sometimes he thought that engineering was the profession for him. He would go to Boston or New York and enter a technical school and learn civil or mining engineering. Mining engineers especially had a fine, adventurous life of it. And he wouldn't have to spend all the rest of his life in Clearfield then.

Clearfield was all right, of course; Perry had been born in it and was loyal to it; but there was a whole big lot of the world that he'd like to see! He got up and pulled an atlas from the lower shelf of his book-case and spread it open. Colorado! Arizona! Nevada! Those were names for you! And look at all the territory out there that didn't have a mark on it! Prairies and deserts and plateaus! Miles and miles and miles of them without a town or a railroad or anything! Gee, it would be great to live in that part of the world, he told himself. Adventures would be thick as blueberries out there. Back here nothing ever happened to a fellow. He wondered if it would be possible to persuade his father to move West, to some one of those fascinating towns with the highly romantic names; like Manzanola or Cotopaxi or Painted Rock. His thoughts

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were far afield now and, while his gaze was fixed on the lilac bush below, his eyes saw wonderful scenes that were very, very foreign to Clearfield. The sunlight stole away from the windows and the shadows gathered in the little yard. The room grew dark.

Just how long Perry would have sat there and dreamed of far-spread prairies and dawn-flushed deserts and awesome cañons had not an interruption occurred, there's no saying. Probably, though, until his mother summoned him to the Sunday night supper. And that, since it was a frugal repast of cold dishes and awaited the Doctor's presence, might not have been announced until seven o'clock. What did rouse him from his dreaming was the sudden appearance of a light in one of the third floor windows of the brick building. It shone for a moment only, for a hand almost immediately pulled down a shade, but its rays were bright enough to interrupt the boy's visions and bring his thoughts confusedly back.

When you've been picturing yourself a cowboy on the Western plains, a cowboy with a picturesque broad-brimmed sombrero, leather chaps, a flannel shirt and a handkerchief knotted about your neck, it is naturally a bit surprising to suddenly see just such a vision before your eyes. And that's what happened to Perry. No sooner was the shade drawn

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at the opposite window than upon it appeared the silhouette of as cowboyish a cowboy as ever rode through sage-brush! Evidently the light was in the center of the room and the occupant was standing between light and window, standing so that for a brief moment his figure was thrown in sharp relief against the shade, and Perry, staring unbelievably, saw the black shadow of a broad felt hat whose crown was dented to a pyramid shape, a face with clean-cut features and a generous mustache and, behind the neck, the knot of a handkerchief! Doubtless the flannel shirt was there, too, and, perhaps, the leather cuffs properly decorated with porcupine quills, but Perry couldn't be sure of this, for before he had time to look below the knotted bandana the silhouette wavered, lengthened oddly and faded from sight, leaving Perry for an instant doubtful of his vision!

"Now what do you know about that?" he murmured. "A regular cowboy, by ginger! What's he doing over there, I wonder. And here I was thinking about him! Anyway, about cowboys! Gee, that's certainly funny! I wish I could have seen if he wore a revolver on his hip! Maybe he'll come back."

But he didn't show himself again, although Perry sat on in the darkness of his little room for the

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better part of a half-hour, staring eagerly and fascinatedly at the lighted window across the twilight. The shade still made a yellowish oblong in the surrounding gloom of the otherwise blank wall when his mother's voice came to him from below summoning him to supper and he left his vigil unwillingly and went downstairs.

Dr. Hull had returned and supper was waiting on the red cloth that always adorned the table on Sunday nights. Perry was so full of his strange coincidence that he hardly waited for the Doctor to finish saying grace before he told about the vision. Rather to his disappointment, neither his father nor mother showed much interest, but perhaps that was because he neglected to tell them that he had been thinking of cowboys at the time. There was no special reason why he should have told them other than that he suspected his mother of a lack of sympathy on the subject of cowboys and the Wild West.

"I guess," said the Doctor, helping to the cold roast lamb and having quite an exciting chase along the back of the platter in pursuit of a runaway sprig of parsley, "I guess your cowboy would have looked like most anyone else if you'd had a look at him. Shadows play queer tricks, Perry."

Dr. Hull was tall and thin, and he stooped quite

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perceptibly. Perhaps the stoop came from carrying his black bag about day after day, for the Doctor had never attained to the dignity of a carriage. When he had to have one he hired it from Stewart, the liveryman. He had a kindly face, but he usually looked tired and had a disconcerting habit of dropping off to sleep in the middle of a conversation or, not infrequently, half-way through a meal. Perry was not unlike his father as to features. He had the same rather short and very straight nose and the same nice mouth, but he had obtained his brown eyes from his mother. Dr. Hull's eyes were pale blue-gray and he had a fashion of keeping them only a little more than half open, which added to his appearance of weariness. He always dressed in a suit of dark clothes which looked black without actually being black. For years he had had his suits made for him by the same unstylish little tailor who dwelt, like a spider in a hole, under the Union Restaurant on Common Street. Whether the suits, one of which was made every spring, all came off the same bolt of cloth, I can't say, but it's a fact that Mrs. Hull had to study long to make out which was this year's suit and which last's. On Sunday evenings, however, the Doctor donned a faded and dearly-loved house-jacket of black velveteen with frayed silk frogs, for on Sunday evenings he kept

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no consultation hours and made no calls if he could possibly help it.

In spite of Perry's efforts, the cowboy was soon abandoned as a subject for conversation. The Doctor was satisfied that Perry had imagined the likeness and Mrs. Hull couldn't see why a cowboy hadn't as much right in the neighboring building as anyone. Perry's explanations failed to convince her of the incongruity of a cowboy in Clearfield, for she replied mildly that she quite distinctly remembered having seen at least a half-dozen cowboys going along Main Street a year or two before, the time the circus was in town!

"Maybe," chuckled the Doctor, "this cowboy got left behind then!"

Perry refused to accept the explanation, and as soon as supper was over he hurried upstairs again. But the light across the back-yard was out and he returned disappointedly to the sitting-room, convinced that the mystery would never be explained. His father had settled himself in the green rep easy chair, with his feet on a foot-rest, and was smoking his big meerschaum pipe that had a bowl shaped like a skull. The Doctor had had that pipe since his student days, and Perry suspected that, next to his mother and himself, it was the most prized of the Doctor's possessions. The Sunday papers lay spread

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across his knees, but he wasn't reading, and Perry seized on the opportunity presented to broach the matter of going in for the Track Team. There had been some difficulty in the fall in persuading his parents to consent to his participation in football, and he wasn't sure that they would look any more kindly on other athletic endeavors. His mother was still busy in the kitchen, for he could hear the dishes rattling, and he was glad of it; it was his mother who looked with most disfavor on such things.

"Dad, I'm going to join the Track Team and try sprinting," announced Perry carelessly.

The Doctor brought his thoughts back with a visible effort.

"Eh?" he asked. "Join what?"

"The Track Team, sir. At school. I think I can sprint a little and I'd like to try it. Maybe I won't be good enough, but Fudge Shaw says I am, and——"

"Sprinting, eh?" The Doctor removed his pipe and rubbed the bowl carefully with the purple silk handkerchief that reposed in an inner pocket of his house-jacket. "Think you're strong enough for that, do you?"

"Why, yes, sir! I tried it to-day and didn't have any trouble. And the track was awfully wet, too."

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“To-day?” The Doctor’s brows went up. “Sunday?”

Perry hastened to explain and was cheered by a slight smile which hovered under his father’s drooping mustache when he pictured Fudge trying to be at both ends of the hundred-yards at once. “You see, dad, I can’t play baseball well enough, and I’d like to do something. I ought to anyway, just to keep in training for football next autumn. I wouldn’t wonder if I got to be regular quarter-back next season.”

“Sprinting,” observed the Doctor, tucking his handkerchief out of sight again, “makes big demands on the heart muscles, Perry. I’ve no reason for supposing that your heart isn’t as strong as the average, but I recall in my college days a case where a boy over-worked himself in a race, the quarter-mile, I think it was, and never was good for much afterwards. He was in my class, and his name was—dear, dear, now what was it? Well, it doesn’t matter. Anyway, that’s what you’ll have to guard against, Perry.”

“But if I began mighty easy, the way you do, and worked up to it, sir——”

“Oh, I dare say it won’t hurt you. Exercise in moderation is always beneficial. It’s putting sudden demands on yourself that does the damage. With

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proper training, going at it slowly, day by day, you know—well, we'll see what your mother says."

Perry frowned and moved impatiently on the couch. "Yes, sir, but you know mother always finds objections to my doing things like that. You'd think I was a regular invalid! Other fellows run and jump and play football and their folks don't think anything of it. But mother——"

"Come, come, Perry! That'll do, son. Your mother is naturally anxious about you. You see, there's only one of you, and we—well, we don't want any harm to come to you."

"Yes, sir," said Perry, more meekly. "Only I thought if you'd say it was all right, before she comes in——"

The Doctor chuckled. "Oh, that's your little game, is it? No, no, we'll talk it over with your mother. She's sensible, Perry, and I dare say she won't make any objections; that is, if you promise to be careful."

"Yes, sir. Why, there's a regular trainer, you know, and the fellows have to do just as he tells them to."

"Who is the trainer?"

"'Skeet' Presser, sir. He's——"

"Skeet?"

"That's what they call him. He's small and

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skinny, sort of like a mosquito. I guess that's why. I don't know what his real name is. He used to be a runner; a jim-dandy, too, they say. He's trainer at the Y. M. C. A. I guess he's considered pretty good. And very careful, sir." Perry added that as a happy afterthought.

The Doctor smiled. "I guess we ought to make a diplomat out of you, son, instead of a doctor."

"I don't think I'll be a doctor, dad."

"You don't? I thought you did."

"I used to, but I—I've sort of changed my mind."

"Diplomats do that, too, I believe. Well, I dare say you're right about it. It doesn't look as if I'd have much of a practice to hand over to you, anyway. It's getting so nowadays about every second case is a charity case. About all you get is gratitude, and not always that. Here's your mother now. Mother, this boy wants to go in for athletics, he tells me. Wants to run races and capture silver mugs. Or maybe they're pewter. What do you say to it?"

"Gracious, what for?" ejaculated Mrs. Hull.

Perry stated his case again while his mother took the green tobacco jar from the mantel and placed it within the Doctor's reach, plumped up a pillow on the couch, picked a thread from the worn red carpet and finally, with a little sigh, seated herself in the small walnut rocker that was her especial

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property. When Perry had finished, his mother looked across at the Doctor.

“What does your father think?” she asked.

“Oh, I think it won’t do him any harm,” was the reply from the Doctor. “Might be good for him, in fact. I tell him he must be careful not to attempt too much at first, that’s all. Running is good exercise if it isn’t overdone.”

“Well, it seems to me,” observed Mrs. Hull, “that if he can play football and not get maimed for life, a little running can’t hurt him. How far would it be, Perry?”

“Oh, only about from here to the corner and back.”

“Well, I don’t see much sense in it, but if you want to do it I haven’t any objection. It doesn’t seem as if much could happen to you just running to G Street and back!”

The Doctor chuckled. “It might be good practice when it comes to running errands, mother. Maybe he’ll be able to get to the grocery and back the same afternoon!”

“Well,” laughed Perry, “you see, dad, when you’re running on the track you don’t meet fellows who want you to stop and play marbles with them!”

CHAPTER IV

THE ODE TO SPRING

WITH the advent of that first warm spring-like weather the High School athletic activities began in earnest. During March the baseball candidates had practiced to some extent indoors and occasionally on the field, but not a great deal had been accomplished. The "cage" in the basement of the school building was neither large nor light, while cold weather, with rain and wet ground, had made outdoor work far from satisfactory. Of the Baseball Team, Clearfield had high hopes this spring. There was a wealth of material left from the successful Nine of the previous spring, including two first-class pitchers, while the captain, Warner Jones, was a good leader as well as a brainy player. Then too, and in the judgment of the school this promised undoubted success, the coaching had been placed in the hands of Dick Lovering. Dick had proven his ability as a baseball coach the summer before and had subsequently piloted the football

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team to victory in the fall, thus winning an admiration and gratitude almost embarrassing to him.

Dick, who had to swing about on crutches where other fellows went on two good legs, came out of school Monday afternoon in company with Lansing White and crossed over to Linden Street where a small blue runabout car stood at the curb. Dick was tall, with dark hair and eyes. Without being especially handsome, his rather lean face was attractive and he had a smile that won friends on the instant. Dick was seventeen and a senior. Lansing, or Lanny, White was a year younger, and a good deal of a contrast to his companion. Lanny fairly radiated health and strength and high spirits. You're not to conclude that Dick suggested ill-health or that he was low-spirited, for that would be far from the mark. There was possibly no more cheerful boy in Clearfield than Richard Lovering, in spite of his infirmity. But Lanny, with his flaxen hair and dark eyes—a combination as odd as it was attractive—and his sun-browned skin and his slimly muscular figure, looked the athlete he was, every inch of him. Lanny was a "three-letter man" at the High School; had captained the football team, caught on the nine and was a sprinter of ability. And, which was no small attainment, he possessed more friends than any other fellow in school. Lanny couldn't help

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making friends; he appeared to do it without conscious effort; there had never been on his part any seeking for popularity.

Lanny cranked the car and seated himself beside Dick. Fully half the students were journeying toward the field, either to take part in practice or to watch it, and the two boys in the runabout answered many hails until they had distanced the pedestrians.

"This," said Lanny, as they circumspectly crossed the car-tracks and turned into Main Street, "is just the sort of weather the doctor ordered. If it keeps up we'll really get started."

"This is April, though," replied Dick, "and everyone knows April!"

"Oh, we'll have more showers, but once the field gets dried out decently they don't matter. I suppose it'll be pretty squishy out there to-day. What we ought to do, Dick, is have the whole field rolled right now while it's still soft. It's awfully rough in right field, and even the infield isn't what you'd call a billiard table."

"Wish we could, Lanny. But I guess if we get the base paths fixed up we'll get all that's coming to us this spring. Too bad we haven't a little money on hand."

"Oh, I know we can't look to the Athletic Association for much. I was only wondering if we

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couldn't get it done somehow ourselves. If we knew someone who had a steam roller we might borrow it!"

"The town has a couple," laughed Dick, "but I'm afraid they wouldn't loan them."

"Why not? Say, that's an idea, Dick! Who do you borrow town property from, anyway? The Mayor?"

"Street Department, I guess. Tell Way to go and see them, why don't you?"

"Way" was Curtis Wayland, manager of the baseball team. Lanny smiled. "Joking aside," he said, "they might do it, mightn't they? Don't they ever loan things?"

"Maybe, but you'd have to have the engineer or chauffeur or whatever they call him to run it for you, and that would be a difficulty."

"Pshaw, anyone could run a steam roller! You could, anyway."

"Can't you see me?" chuckled Dick. "Suppose, though, I got nabbed for exceeding the speed limit? I guess, Lanny, if that field gets rolled this spring it will be done by old-fashioned man-power. We might borrow a roller somewhere and get a lot of the fellows out and have them take turns pushing it."

"It would take a week of Sundays," replied

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Lanny discouragingly. "You wait. I'm not finished with that other scheme yet."

"Borrowing a roller from the town, you mean? Well, I've no objection, but don't ask me to run it. I'd be sure to put it through the fence or something; and goodness knows we need all the fence we've got!"

"Yes, it'll be a miracle if it doesn't fall down if anyone hits a ball against it!"

"If it happens in the Springdale game you'll hear no complaint from me," said Dick, adding hurriedly, "That is, if it's one of our team who does it!"

"Ever think of putting a sign on the fence in center field?" asked Lanny. "'Hit This Sign and Get Ten Dollars,' or something of that sort, you know. It might increase the team's average a lot, Dick."

"You're full of schemes to-day, aren't you? Does that fence look to you as if it would stand being hit very often?" They had turned into A Street and the block-long expanse of sagging ten-foot fence stretched beside them. "I've about concluded that being presented with an athletic field is like getting a white elephant in your stocking at Christmas!"

"Gee, this field is two white elephants and a pink hippopotamus," replied Lanny as he jumped out in

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front of the players' gate. Dick turned off the engine and thoughtfully removed the plug from the dash coil, thus foiling youngsters with experimental desires. His crutches were beside him on the running-board, and, lifting them from the wire clips that held them there, he deftly swung himself from the car and passed through the gate. They were the first ones to arrive, but before they had returned to the dressing-room under the nearer grandstand after a pessimistic examination of the playing field, others had begun to dribble in and a handful of youths were arranging themselves comfortably on the seats behind first base. But if the audience expected anything of a spectacular nature this afternoon they were disappointed, for the practice was of the most elementary character.

There was a half-hour at the net with Tom Nostrand and Tom Haley pitching straight balls to the batters and then another half-hour of fielding, Bert Cable, last year's captain and now a sort of self-appointed assistant coach, hitting fungoes to outfielders, and Curtis Wayland, manager of the team, batting to the infield. The forty or fifty onlookers in the stands soon lost interest when it was evident that Coach Lovering had no intention of staging any sort of a contest, and by ones and twos they took their departure. Even had they all gone, however,

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the field would have been far from empty, for there were nearly as many team candidates as spectators to-day. More than forty ambitious youths had responded to the call and it required all the ingenuity of Dick Lovering and Captain Warner Jones to give each one a chance. The problem was finally solved by sending a bunch of tyros into extreme left field, under charge of Manager Wayland, where they fielded slow grounders and pop-flies and tested their throwing arms.

It was while chasing a ball that had got by him that Way noticed a fluttering sheet of paper near the cinder track. It had been creased and folded, but now lay flat open, challenging curiosity. Way picked it up and glanced at it as he returned to his place. It held all sorts of scrawls and scribbles, but the words "William Butler Shaw," and the letters "W. B. S.," variously arranged and entwined, were frequently repeated. Occupying the upper part of the sheet were six or seven lines of what, since the last words rhymed with each other, Way concluded to be poetry. Since many of the words had been scored out and superseded by others, and since the writing was none too legible in any case, Way had to postpone the reading of the complete poem. He stuffed it in his pocket, with a chuckle, and went back to amusing his awkward squad.

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Fudge Shaw sat on the bench between Felker and Grover and awaited his turn in the outfield. Fudge had played in center some, but he was not quite Varsity material, so to speak, and his hopes of making even the second team, which would be formed presently, from what coach and captain rejected, were not strong. Still, Fudge "liked to stick around where things were doing," as he expressed it, and he accepted his impending fate with philosophy. Besides, he had more than half made up his mind to cast his lot with the Track Team this spring. He was discussing the gentle art of putting the twelve-pound shot with Guy Felker when Dick summoned the outfield trio in and sent Fudge and two others to take their places. Fudge trotted out to center and set about his task of pulling down Bert Cable's flies. Perhaps his mind was too full of shot-putting to allow him to give the needed attention to the work at hand. At all events, he managed to judge his first ball so badly that it went six feet over his head and was fielded in by one of Way's squad. Way was laughing when Fudge turned toward him after throwing the ball to the batter.

"A fellow needs a pair of smoked glasses out here," called Fudge extenuatingly. This, in view of the fact that the sun was behind Fudge's right shoulder, was a lamentably poor excuse. Possibly

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he realized it, for he added: "My eyes have been awfully weak lately."

Way, meeting the ball gently with his bat and causing a wild commotion amongst his fielders, nodded soberly. "And for many other reasons," he called across.

"Eh?" asked Fudge puzzled. But there was no time for more just then as Bert Cable, observing his inattention, meanly shot a long low fly into left field, and Fudge, starting late, had to run half-way to the fence in order to attempt the catch. Of course he missed it and then, when he had chased it down, made matters worse by throwing at least twelve feet to the left of Cable on the return. The ex-captain glared contemptuously and shouted some scathing remark that Fudge didn't hear. After that, he got along fairly well, sustaining a bruised finger, however, as a memento of the day's activities. When practice was over he trudged back to the dressing-room and got into his street clothes. Fortunately, most of the new fellows had dressed at home and so it was possible to find room in which to squirm out of things without collisions. While Fudge was lacing his shoes he observed that Way and his particular crony, Will Scott, who played third base, were unusually hilarious in a far corner of the room.

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But Fudge was unsuspecting, and presently he found himself walking home with the pair.

"Say, this is certainly peachy weather, isn't it?" inquired Will as they turned into B Street. "Aren't you crazy about spring, Way?"

"Am I? Well, rather! O beauteous spring!"

"So am I. You know it makes the birds sing in the trees."

"Sure. And it makes the April breeze to blow."

"What's wrong with you chaps?" asked Fudge perplexedly. The strange words struck him as dimly familiar but he didn't yet connect them with their source.

"Fudge," replied Way sadly, "I fear you have no poetry in your soul. Doesn't the spring awaken—er—awaken feelings in your breast? Don't you feel the—the appeal of the sunshine and the singing birds and all that?"

"You're batty," said Fudge disgustedly.

"Now for my part," said Will Scott, "spring art, I ween, the best of all the seasons."

"Now you're saying something," declared Way enthusiastically. "It clothes the earth with green——"

"And for numerous other reasons," added Will gravely.

A great light broke on Fudge and his rotund

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cheeks took on a vivid tinge. "W-w-what you s-s-silly chumps think you're up to?" he demanded. "W-w-where did you g-g-g-get that st-t-t-tuff?"

"Stuff!" exclaimed Way protestingly. "That's poetry, Fudge. Gen-oo-ine poetry. Want to hear it all?"

"No, I don't!"

But Will had already started declaiming and Way chimed in:

"O Beauteous Spring, thou art, I ween,
The best of all the Seasons,
Because you clothe the Earth with green
And for numerous other reasons!"

"I hope you ch-ch-choke: groaned Fudge. "W-w-where'd you get it? Who t-t-told you——"

"Fudge," replied Way, laughingly, "you shouldn't leave your poetic effusions around the landscape if you don't want them read." He pulled the sheet of paper from his pocket and flaunted it temptingly just out of reach. "'You make the birds sing in the trees——'"

"'The April breeze to blow,'" continued Will.

"'The sun to shine——' What's the rest of it, Fudge? Say, it's corking! It's got a swing to it that's simply immense!"

"And then the sentiment, the poetic feeling!" elaborated Will. "How do you do it, Fudge?"

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“Aw, q-q-quit it, fellows, and g-g-g-give me that!” begged Fudge shame-facedly. “I just did it for f-f-fun. It d-d-dropped out of my p-p-p——”

But “pocket” was too much for Fudge in his present state of mind, and he gave up the effort and tried to get the sheet of paper away. He succeeded finally, by the time they had reached Lafayette Street, where their ways parted, and tore it to small bits and dropped it into someone’s hedge. Way and Will departed joyfully, and until they were out of earshot Fudge could hear them declaiming the “Ode to Spring.” He went home a prey to a deep depression. He feared that he had by no means heard the last of the unfortunate poetical effort. And, as the future proved, his fears were far from groundless.

CHAPTER V.

PERRY REMEMBERS

FUDGE had an engagement to go to the moving pictures that evening with Perry Hull. They put on the new reels on Mondays and Fudge was a devoted "first-nighter." Very shortly after supper was over he picked up a book and carelessly strolled toward the hall.

"Where are you going, William?" asked his mother.

"Over to the library," replied Fudge, making a strong display of the book in his hand.

"Well, don't stay late. Haven't you any studying to do to-night?"

"No'm, not much. I'll do it when I come back."

"Seems to me," said Mrs. Shaw doubtfully, "it would be better to do your studying first."

"I don't feel like studying so soon after supper," returned Fudge plaintively. "I won't be gone very long—I guess."

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"Very well, dear. Close the door after you. It's downright chilly again to-night."

"Yes'm." Fudge slipped his cap to the back of his round head and opened the side door. There he hesitated. Of course, he was going to the library, although he didn't especially want to, for it was many blocks out of his way, but he meant to make his visit to that place as short as possible in order to call for Perry and reach the theater early enough not to miss a single feature of the evening's program. And he was practically telling a lie. Fudge didn't like that. He felt decidedly uneasy as he stood with the door knob in hand. The trouble was that his mother didn't look kindly on moving pictures. She didn't consider them harmful, but she did think them a waste of time, and was firmly convinced that once a month was quite often enough for Fudge to indulge his passion for that form of entertainment. Fudge had a severe struggle out there in the hallway, and I like to think that he would have eventually decided to make known his principal destination had not Mrs. Shaw unfortunately interrupted his cogitations.

"William, have you gone?"

"No'm."

"Well, don't hold the door open, please. I feel a draft on my feet."

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"Yes'm." Fudge slowly closed the door, with himself on the outside. The die was cast. He tried to comfort himself with the assurance that if his mother hadn't spoken just when she did he would have asked permission to go to the "movies." It wasn't his fault. He passed out of the yard whistling blithely enough, but before he had reached the corner the whistle had died away. He wished he had told the whole truth. He was more than half inclined to go back, but it was getting later every minute and he had to walk eight blocks to the library and five back to the theater, and it would take him several minutes to exchange his book, and Perry might not be ready——

Fudge was so intent on all this that he passed the front of the Merrick house, on the corner, without, as usual, announcing his transit with a certain peculiar whistle common to him and his friends. He walked hurriedly, determinedly, trying to keep his thoughts on the pleasure in store, hoping they'd have a rattling good melodrama on the bill to-night and would present less of the "sentimental rot" than was their custom. But Conscience stalked at Fudge's side, and the further he got from home the more uncomfortable he felt in his mind; and his thoughts refused to stay placed on the "movies." But while he paused in crossing G Street to let one of the big

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yellow cars trundle past him a splendid idea came to him. He would telephone! There was a booth in the library, and if he had a nickel—quick examination of his change showed that he was possessed of eleven cents beyond the sum required to purchase admission to the theater. With a load off his mind, he hurried on faster than ever, ran across the library grounds with no heed to the "Keep off the Grass" signs and simply hurtled through the swinging green doors.

It was the work of only a minute or two to seize a book from the rack on the counter—it happened to be a treatise on the Early Italian Painters, but Fudge didn't care—and make the exchange. The assistant librarian looked somewhat surprised at Fudge's choice, but secretly hoped that it indicated a departure from the sensational fiction usually selected by the boy, and passed the volume across to him at last with an approving smile. Fudge was too impatient to see the smile, however. The book once in his possession, he hurried to the telephone booth in the outer hall and demanded his number. Then a perfectly good five-cent piece dropped forever out of his possession and he heard his mother's voice at the other end of the line.

"This is Fudge. Say, Ma, I thought—I'm at the library, Ma, and I got the book I wanted, and I

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thought, seeing it's so early—say, Ma, may I go to the movies for a little while?"

"You intended to go all the time, didn't you, William?" came his mother's voice.

"Yes'm, but——"

"Why didn't you tell me?"

That was something of a poser. "Well, I meant to, but—but you said not to keep the door open and—and——" Fudge's voice dwindled into silence.

"Why do you tell me now?"

Gee, but she certainly could ask a lot of hard questions, he reflected. "I thought maybe—oh, I don't know, Ma. May I? Just for a little while? I'm going with Perry—if you say I can."

"I'd rather you told me in the first place, William, but telling me now shows that you know you did wrong. You mustn't tell lies, William, and when you said you were going to the library——"

"Yes'm, I know!" Fudge was shifting impatiently from one foot to the other, his eyes fixed on the library clock, seen through an oval pane in one of the green baize doors. "I—I'm sorry. Honest, I am. That's why I telephoned, Ma."

"If I let you go to-night you won't ask to go again next week?"

"No'm," replied Fudge dejectedly.

"Very well, then you may go. And you needn't

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leave before it's over, William, because if you don't go next week you might as well see all you can this time."

"Yes'm! Thanks! Good-by!"

Fudge knew a short cut from Ivy Street to G Street, and that saved nearly a minute even though it necessitated climbing a high fence and trespassing on someone's premises. He reached Perry's and, to his vast relief, found that youth awaiting him at the gate. Perry was slightly surprised to be hailed from the direction opposite to that in which he was looking, but joined Fudge at the corner and, in response to the latter's earnest and somewhat breathless appeal to "Get a move on," accompanied him rapidly along the next block. Just as they came into sight of the brilliantly illumined front of the moving picture house, eight o'clock began to sound on the City Hall bell and Fudge broke into a run.

"Come on!" he panted. "We'll be late!"

They weren't, though. The orchestra was still dolefully tuning up as they found seats. The orchestra consisted principally of a pianist, although four other musicians were arranged lonesomely on either side. The two boys were obliged to sit well over toward the left of the house and when the orchestra began the overture Fudge's gaze, attracted to the performers, stopped interestedly at the pianist.

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"Say, Perry," he said, "they've got a new guy at the piano. See?"

Perry looked and nodded. Then he took a second look and frowned puzzledly. "Who is he?" he asked.

"I don't know. But the other fellow was short and fat. Say, I hope they have a good melodrama, don't you?"

"Yes, one of those Western plays, eh?" Perry's gaze went back to the man at the piano. There was something about him that awakened recollection. He was a tall, broad-shouldered man of twenty-six or -seven, with clear-cut and very good-looking features, and a luxuriant mustache, as Perry could see when he turned to smile at one of the violinists. He played the piano as though he thoroughly enjoyed it, swaying a little from the hips and sometimes emphasizing with a sudden swift bend of his head.

"He can play all around the other guy," said Fudge in low and admiring whispers. "Wish I could play a piano like that. I'll bet he can 'rag' like anything!"

At that moment the house darkened and the program commenced with the customary weekly review. Fudge sat through some ten minutes of that patiently, and was only slightly bored when a rustic comedy was unrolled before him, but when the next

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film developed into what he disdainfully called "one of those mushy things," gloom began to settle over his spirits. He squirmed impatiently in his seat and muttered protestingly. A sharp-faced, elderly lady next to him audibly requested him to "sit still, for Mercy's sake!" Fudge did the best he could and virtue was rewarded after a while. "Royston of the Rangers," announced the film. Fudge sat up, devoured the cast that followed and, while the orchestra burst into a jovial two-step, nudged Perry ecstatically.

"Here's your Western play," he whispered.

Perry nodded. Then the first scene swept on the screen and Fudge was happy. It was a quickly-moving, breath-taking drama, and the hero, a Texas Ranger, bore a charmed life if anyone ever did. He simply had to. If he hadn't he'd have been dead before the film had unrolled a hundred feet! Perry enjoyed that play even more than Fudge, perhaps, for he was still enthralled by yesterday's dreams. There were rangers and cowboys and Mexicans and a sheriff's posse and many other picturesque persons, and "battle, murder and sudden death" was the order of the day. During a running fight between galloping rangers and a band of Mexican desperados Fudge almost squirmed off his chair to the floor. After that there was a really funny

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“comic” and that, in turn, was followed by another melodrama which, if not as hair-raising as the first, brought much satisfaction to Fudge. On the whole, it was a pretty good show. Fudge acknowledged it as he and Perry wormed their way out through the loitering audience at the end of the performance.

They discussed it as they made their way along to Castle’s Drug Store where Perry was to treat to sodas. For Fudge at least half the fun was found in talking the show over afterwards. He was a severe critic, and if the manager of the theater could have heard his remarks about the “mushy” film he might have been moved to exclude such features thereafter. When they had had their sodas and had turned back toward Perry’s house, Perry suddenly stood stock-still on the sidewalk and ejaculated: “Gee, I know where I saw him!”

“Saw who?” demanded Fudge. “Come on, you chump.”

“Why, the fellow who played the piano. I’ll bet you anything he’s the cowboy!”

“You try cold water,” said Fudge soothingly. “Just wet a towel and put it around your head——”

“No, listen, will you, Fudge? I want to tell you.” So Perry recounted the odd coincidence of the preceding evening, ending with: “And I’ll bet you anything you like that’s the same fellow who was

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playing the piano there to-night. I recognized him, I tell you, only I couldn't think at first."

"Well, he didn't look like a cowboy to-night," replied Fudge dubiously. "Besides, what would he be doing here? This isn't any place for cowboys. I guess you kind of imagined that part of it. Maybe he had on a felt hat; I don't say he didn't; but I guess you imagined the rest of it. It—it's psychological, Perry. You were thinking about cowboys and such things and then this fellow appeared at the window and you thought he was dressed like one."

"No, I didn't. I tell you I could see the handkerchief around his neck and—and everything! I don't say he really is a cowboy, but I know mighty well he was dressed like one. And I know he's the fellow we saw playing the piano."

"Oh, shucks, cowboys don't play pianos, Perry. Besides, what does it matter anyway?"

"Nothing, I suppose, only—only it's sort of funny. I'd like to know why he was got up like a cowboy."

"Why don't you ask him? Tell you what we'll do, Perry, we'll go up there to-morrow after the show's over and lay in wait for him."

"Up to his room? I wonder if he has an office. Maybe he gives lessons, Fudge."

"What sort of lessons?"

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"Piano lessons. Why would he have an office?"

"Search me. But we'll find out. We'll put 'Young Sleuth' on his trail. Maybe there's a mystery about him. I'll drop around after practice tomorrow and we'll trail him down. Say, what about the Track Team? Thought you were going to join."

"I was. Only—oh, I got to thinking maybe I couldn't run very fast, after all."

"Piffle! We'll have another trial, then. I'll get Gordon to hold the watch at the start and I'll time you at the finish. What do you say? Want to try it to-morrow?"

"No, I'd feel like a fool," muttered Perry. "Maybe I'll register to-morrow, anyway. I dare say it won't do any harm even if I find I can't sprint much. What about you and putting the shot?"

"I'm going to try for it, I guess. Baseball's no good for me. They won't even give me a place on the Second, I suppose. Guess I'll talk to Felker about it to-morrow. You're silly if you don't have a try at it, Perry. You've got the making of a dandy sprinter; you mark my words!"

"If you'll register for the team, I will," said Perry:

"All right! It's a bargain!"

CHAPTER VI

THE FALSE MUSTACHE

WELL?" asked Lanny.

Curtis Wayland shook his head and smiled. "He thought I was fooling at first. Then he thought I was crazy. After that he just pitied me for not having any sense."

"I've pitied you all my life for that," laughed Lanny. "But what did he say?"

"Said in order for him to let us have the use of town property he'd have to introduce a bill or something in the Council and have it passed and signed by the Mayor and sworn to by the Attorney and sealed by the Sealer and—and——"

"And stamped by the stamper?" suggested Dick Lovering helpfully.

"Cut out the comedy stuff," said Lanny. "He just won't do it, eh?"

"That's what I gathered," Way assented dryly. "And if, in my official capacity of——"

"Or incapacity," interpolated Lanny sweetly.

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Way scowled fearsomely. "If in my capacity of manager of this team," he resumed with dignity, "I'm required to go on any more idiotic errands like that I'm going to resign. I may be crazy and foolish, but I hate to have folks mention it."

"We're all touchy on our weak points," said Lanny kindly. "Well, I suppose you did the best you could, Way, but I'm blessed if I see how it would hurt them to let us use their old road roller."

"He also dropped some careless remark about the expense of running it," observed Way, "from which I gathered that, even if he did let us take it, he meant to sock us about fifteen dollars a day!"

"Who is he?" Dick asked.

"He's Chairman or something of the Street Department."

"Superintendent of Streets," corrected Way. "I saw it on the door."

"I mean," explained Dick, "what's his name?"

"Oh, Burns. He's Ned Burns' father."

"Uncle," corrected Way.

"Could Burns have done anything with him, do you suppose?" Dick asked thoughtfully.

"I don't believe so. The man is deficient in public spirit and lacking in—in charitable impulse, or something." Lanny frowned intently at Way until the latter said:

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“Out with it! What’s on your mind?”

“Nothing much. Only—well, that field certainly needs a good rolling.”

“It certainly does,” assented Way. “But if you’re hinting for me to go back and talk to that man again——”

“I’m not. The time for asking has passed. We gave them a chance to be nice about it and they wouldn’t. Now it’s up to us.”

“Right-o, old son! What are we going to do about it?”

Lanny smiled mysteriously. “You just hold your horses and see,” he replied. “I guess the crowd’s here, Dick. Shall we start things up?”

“Yes, let’s get at it. Hello, Fudge!”

“Hello, fellers! Say, Dick, I’m quitting.”

“Quitting? Oh, baseball, you mean. What’s the trouble?”

“Oh, I’m not good enough and there’s no use my hanging around, I guess. I’m going out for the Track Team to-morrow. I thought I’d let you know.”

“Thanks. Well, I’m sorry, Fudge, but you’re right about it. You aren’t quite ready for the team yet. Maybe next year——”

“That’s what I thought. Lanny’ll be gone then and maybe I’ll catch for you.”

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"That's nice of you," laughed Lanny. "I was worried about what was going to happen after I'd left. Meanwhile, though, Fudge, what particular stunt are you going to do on the Track Team?"

"Weights, I guess. Perry Hull's going out for the team and he dared me to. Think I could put the shot, Dick?"

"I really don't know, Fudge. It wouldn't take you long to find out, though. You're pretty strong, aren't you?"

"I guess so," replied Fudge quite modestly. "Anyway, Felker's yelling for fellows to join and I thought there wouldn't be any harm in trying."

"'And for many other reasons,'" murmured Way. The others smiled, and Fudge, with an embarrassed and reproachful glance, hurried away to where Perry was awaiting him in the stand.

"Fellows who read other fellows' things that aren't meant for them to read are pretty low-down, I think," he ruminated. "And I'll tell him so, too, if he doesn't let up."

"Don't you love spring?" asked Perry as Fudge joined him. "It makes——"

Fudge turned upon him belligerently. "Here, don't you start that too!" he exclaimed warmly.

"Start what?" gasped Perry. "I only said——"

"I heard what you said! Cut it out!"

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“What’s the matter with you?” asked Perry. “Can’t I say that I like spring if I want to?”

“And what else were you going to say?” demanded Fudge sternly.

“That it makes you feel nice and lazy,” replied the other in hurt tones.

“Oh! Nothing about—about the birds singing or the April breeze?”

Perry viewed his friend in genuine alarm. “Honest, Fudge, I don’t know what you’re talking about. Aren’t you well?”

“Then you haven’t heard it.” Fudge sighed. “Sorry I bit your head off.”

“Heard what?” asked Perry in pardonable curiosity.

Fudge hesitated and tried to retreat, but Perry insisted on being informed, and finally Fudge told about the “Ode to Spring” and the fun the fellows were having with him. “I get it on all sides,” he said mournfully. “Tappen passed me a note in Latin class this morning; wanted to know what the other reasons were. Half the fellows in school are on to it and I don’t hear anything else. I’m sick of it!”

Perry’s eyes twinkled, but he expressed proper sympathy, and Fudge finally consented to forget his grievance and lend a critical eye to the doings

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of the baseball candidates. They didn't remain until practice was over, however, for, in his capacity of "Young Sleuth," Fudge was determined to unravel the mystery of the cowboy-pianist, as he called the subject for investigation. The afternoon performance at the moving picture theater was over about half-past four or quarter to five, and a few minutes after four the two boys left the field and went back to town. Fudge explained the method of operation on the way.

"We'll wait outside the theater," he said. "I'll be looking in a window and you can be on the other side of the street. He mustn't see us, you know."

"Why?" asked Perry.

"Because he might suspect."

"Suspect what?"

"Why, that we were on his track," explained Fudge a trifle impatiently. "You don't suppose detectives let the folks they are shadowing know it, do you?"

"I don't see what harm it would do if he saw us. There isn't anything for him to get excited about, is there?"

"You can't tell. I've been thinking a lot about this chap, Perry, and the more I—the more I study the case the less I like it." Fudge frowned intensely. "There's something mighty suspicious about him,

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I think. I wouldn't be surprised if he'd done something."

"What do you mean, done something?"

"Why, committed some crime. Maybe he's sort of hiding out here. No one would think of looking for him in a movie theater, would they?"

"Maybe not, but if they went to the theater they'd be pretty certain to see him, wouldn't they?"

"Huh! He's probably disguised. I'll bet that mustache of his is a fake one."

"It didn't look so," Perry objected. "What sort of—of crime do you suppose he committed, Fudge?"

"Well, he's pretty slick-looking. I wouldn't be surprised if he turned out to be a safe-breaker. Maybe he's looking for a chance to crack a safe here in Clearfield; sort of studying the lay of the land, you know, and seeing where there's a good chance to get a lot of money. We might go over to the police station, Perry, and see if there's a description of him there. I'll bet you he's wanted somewhere for something all right!"

"Oh, get out, Fudge! The fellow's a dandy-looking chap. And even if he had done something and I knew it, I wouldn't go and tell on him."

"Well, I didn't say I would, did I? B-b-but there's no harm in finding out, is there?"

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Whether Fudge's watch was slow or whether, absorbed in their conversation, they consumed more time than they realized on the way, the City Hall clock proclaimed twenty-two minutes to five when they reached the Common and, to Fudge's intense disgust, the theater was out. The ticket-seller had departed from his glass hutch between the two doors and the latter were closed. Fudge scowled his displeasure.

"He's made his getaway," he said, "but he can't escape us long. The Hand of the Law——" He paused, his attention attracted by one of the colorful posters adorning the entrance. "Say, Perry, that's where the Mexican tries to throw her off the cliff. Remember? I'd like to see that again. It's a corker! Gee, why didn't we think to come here this afternoon?"

"I'd rather wait until Thursday and see some new ones," replied Perry. "Come over to the house for a while, Fudge."

"Aren't you going on with this?" asked Fudge surprisedly.

"Well, he's gone, hasn't he?"

"That doesn't keep us from having a look at his hiding place, does it? We'll go around there and reconnoiter. Come on."

But Perry held back.

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"I wouldn't want him to think we were snooping on him, Fudge."

"He won't know. We'll just track him to his lair but we won't let on we're after him. It's a good idea to know where to find him in case we want him. And we'd ought to find out whether there's more than one way for him to get in and out."

"I know there is. There's a front door and a back. The back door lets out into that little alley next to Cosgrove's store on Common Street."

"Cosgrove's? Ha!" Fudge stopped abruptly and tried to look as much like his favorite hero, "Young Sleuth," as possible. "That's it, then!"

"What's it?" asked Perry impatiently.

"It's Cosgrove's he's after. Don't you see?" Cosgrove's was the principal jewelry store in Clearfield. "That's why he rented a room in that block, Perry. All he's got to do is to go out the back way to the alley and there he is!"

"You're crazy," laughed Perry. "You don't know that the man's a—a criminal, do you?"

"Well, it looks mighty like it," asserted Fudge, shaking his head in a very satisfied way. "Everything points to it. We'll have a look at the alley first, I guess."

The entrance was only a half-block distant and Perry followed his enthusiastic friend up its nar-

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aw length until it stopped at a board fence beyond which was the back yard of the next house to the Hulls'. On the way Fudge paid much attention to the three barred windows of Cosgrove's store.

"See if you see signs of a file," he whispered to Perry. "That's what he'd probably do; come down here at night and file the bars away. Maybe we'd better go into the store and see where the safe is located."

"If you don't stop tugging at those bars we'll get pinched," objected Perry. He was losing his interest in the affair and had begun to think Fudge's sleuthing rather tiresome. Besides, it was getting sort of dark in the little alley and he had already collided painfully with an ash-barrel. He was relieved when Fudge finally satisfied himself that so far, at least, the bars of the jewelry store windows had not been tampered with. Fudge was evidently disappointed and not a little surprised. He did a good deal of muttering as he went on to the end of the alley. There he stared across the fence.

"Whose house is that?" he asked in a hoarse whisper.

"Judge Folwell's. No one lives in it now, though."

"Hm," said Fudge. "Your house is over there, isn't it?"

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"Yes. That's the roof."

"Has your father got a safe?"

"No, he hasn't. For the love of mud, Fudge, come on home."

"Wait a minute." Fudge turned to the back of the brick block. "What's on the first floor here?"

"Ginter's Bakery."

"Then this door opens into that?"

"I don't know. I suppose so. What difference does it make?"

"It makes a lot of difference," replied Fudge with much dignity. "If it does, he'd have to pass through the bakery to get out this way, wouldn't he? And someone would be likely to see him. What we've got to find out is whether it does or doesn't." Fudge walked up the two stone steps and tried the latch. The door opened easily. Inside was silence and darkness. Fudge hesitated. "Maybe," he murmured, "we'd better try the front way first."

They did, Perry, for one, retracing his steps through the darkening alley with relief. At the main entrance of the building on G Street they climbed two flights of stairs, Fudge cautioning his companion against making too much noise, and, with assumed carelessness, loitered down the hall to the last door on the right. There were some five or six offices on each side and several of them appeared

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to be unoccupied at present. Nor was there anything about the door they sought to suggest that the room behind it was the refuge of a desperate criminal or, for that matter, anyone else. The door was closed and bore no sign. The two boys halted at a discreet distance and studied it.

“Wonder if he’s in there now,” whispered Fudge.

“Probably,” replied Perry uneasily. The hall was silent and shadows lurked in the corners. From the floor below came the faint ticking of a typewriter, but that was all the sound that reached them until an automobile horn screeched outside. Perry jumped nervously.

“Come on,” he whispered. “Let’s beat it. He might come out and——”

At that moment footsteps sounded on the lower flight. Perry tugged at Fudge’s arm. “Come on, can’t you?” he urged. But Fudge was listening intently to the approaching steps. The person, whoever he was, tramped along the hall below and began the ascent of the next flight. Perry looked about for concealment. A few yards away a half-open door showed an empty and dusty interior. Perry slid through and Fudge followed, closing the door softly all but a few inches. The footsteps reached the top of the stairs and approached along the corridor, passed and kept on toward the back of the

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building. Cautiously the two boys peered out. It was the cowboy-pianist. He paused at the last portal, produced a key, inserted it in the lock and opened the door. And as he passed from sight he raised a hand and removed the luxuriant brown mustache from his upper lip!

CHAPTER VII

FUDGE REVOLTS

THE boys crept quietly down the stairs and out into the street. It was not until they had turned the corner that Fudge broke the silence.

“What do you know about that?” he murmured awedly.

“Looks as though you were right,” returned Perry admiringly. “He was disguised, all right.”

“I—I’ve got to think this over,” said Fudge. He was plainly bewildered. They paused at Perry’s gate and he declined an invitation to enter, with a shake of his head. “I guess,” he muttered, “there’s more in this than I thought. You saw him take it off, didn’t you?”

“Of course!”

Fudge sighed relievedly. Perhaps he had doubted the evidences of his senses. “Well, I’ll think it over, and to-morrow——”

“What?” asked Perry interestedly.

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"We'll see," was Fudge's cryptic and unsatisfactory reply. "So long. And not a word of this to a living soul, Perry!"

"All right. But, say, Fudge"—Perry dropped his voice—"do you really think he's a—a criminal?"

"What else can he be? Folks don't wear false mustaches for nothing, do they?"

"N-no, but he might be doing it for—for a sort of joke," returned the other lamely.

Fudge sniffed. "Joke! I'll bet the joke will be on him before I'm—before we're done with him! You leave it to me. Night!"

Fudge strode off in the twilight. There was something very stealthy and even somber in his departure. Perry, watching a bit admiringly, saw the careful manner in which the amateur detective discounted surprise by keeping close to the fence and peering cautiously at each tree as he approached it. At last Fudge melted mysteriously into the distant shadows down the street, and Perry, somewhat thrilled with the afternoon's adventure, hurried upstairs and glanced toward the window in the brick building. There was a light behind the lowered shade, but, although he kept watch for nearly a half-hour, nothing came into view.

He wondered what was going on behind that window, and imagined all sorts of deliciously excit-

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ing things. Perhaps the mysterious cowboy pianist was studying a plan of Cosgrove's jewelry store, or perhaps he was bending over a fascinating assortment of jimmies and files and—yes, there'd be an acetylene torch for burning a hole in the steel safe, and there'd be dynamite or nitro-glycerine or something equally useful to a safe-breaker! If only he might somehow get a momentary peek into that room over there! He was so full of his interesting neighbor that he ate almost no supper and incurred the anxious displeasure of his mother.

“Aren't you feeling well, Perry?” she asked.

“No'm—I mean, yes'm!”

“I think, Father, you'd better have a look at him after supper. His face looks feverish to me.”

“I'm all right, honest, Ma! I—I just ain't hungry.”

“Don't say 'ain't,' Perry. Have you been eating this afternoon?”

“No'm.”

“I wouldn't worry about him,” said the Doctor. “These first spring days are likely to interfere with one's appetite. Have you started that sprinting yet? Been doing too much running to-day?”

“No, sir, we don't start until to-morrow. Dad, did you ever see a burglar?”

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"I suppose so. I don't recollect. Have you seen one around?"

Perry almost changed color. "No, sir—that is—I just wondered whether they wore false mustaches."

"Now, Perry Hull, what sort of nonsense have you been reading?" inquired his mother. "Some of the books you get out of the library aren't fit for any boy; all about fighting and Indians and—and now it's burglars, I dare say! I don't see when you have time for reading, anyway, with all those lessons to study. Your report card last month wasn't anything to boast of, either."

"It was all right except math.," defended Perry. "Gee, if you think my card was punk, you ought to see some of them!"

"I didn't say anything about 'punk,'" retorted Mrs. Hull with dignity. "And I'd like to know where you get all the horrid words you use lately. I dare say it's that Shaw boy. He looks rather common, I think."

"There, there, Mother, don't scold him any more," said the Doctor soothingly. "Slang's harmless enough. Have a slice of lamb, son?"

Perry dutifully passed his plate and consumed the lamb, not because he had any appetite for it but in order to allay his mother's suspicions of ill-

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ness. There were some especially nasty bottles in the Doctor's office and Perry had long ago vowed never to be ill again! After supper he excused himself early and retired to his room to study. Mrs. Hull smiled commendingly. It was evident to her that her remarks had borne fruit. But Perry didn't get very much studying done, because he spent much of the evening peering cautiously around the corner of his window shade. Of course he realized that the safe-breaker would be at the theater in his assumed rôle of pianist, but it had occurred to Perry that possibly he had an accomplice. But the opposite window remained dark all the evening, or at least until after Perry, ready for bed, had sent a final look across the starlit gloom. What happened subsequently he didn't know, but he dreamed the wildest, most extravagant dreams in which he was at one moment participating in furious deeds of crime and the next, aligned on the side of Justice, was heroically pursuing a whole horde of criminals across the roofs of the city. That the criminals were under the able and even brilliant leadership of Fudge Shaw did not strike him as the least bit incongruous—until the next morning!

When he finally tumbled out of bed, after reviewing his dreams, or as much as he could recall of

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them, he went first to the window and looked across the back yard. His heart leaped into his throat at what he saw. The last window on the third floor of the brick building was wide-open and there, in plain view of all the world, sat the safe-breaker! A small table was pulled in front of the casement and the safe-breaker was seated at it. On the table were a cup and saucer, some dishes and a newspaper. Perry gazed fascinatedly. The safe-breaker alternately read the paper and ate his breakfast. Perry couldn't be quite certain, but it appeared that the breakfast consisted of sausage and rolls and coffee. Whatever it was, the man ate with evident enjoyment, slowly, perusing the morning news between mouthfuls. There was no mustache to-day. Instead, the safe-breaker's face was clean-shaven and undeniably good-looking in a rugged way. He had a rather large nose and a generous mouth and lean cheeks and a very determined-looking chin. His hair was brown, with some glints of red in it where the sunlight touched it. He was attired in quite ordinary clothes, so far as the observer could see, but wore no coat; perhaps because the morning was delightfully warm and the sunlight shone in at his window. Fortunately for Perry, the man never once glanced his way. If he had he might easily have seen

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a boy in blue pajamas staring fascinatedly across at him with very wide, round eyes. In which case doubtless he would have suspected that he was under surveillance!

Perry was still looking when his mother's voice summoned him to action. Regretfully he withdrew his gaze and hurried off to the bathroom. When he returned the safe-breaker was still there, but he had finished his breakfast and was smoking a short pipe, still busy with the paper, and so Perry was obliged to leave him, and when he had finished his own repast and raced upstairs again the opposite window was empty. Perry set off to school fairly weighted down with the startling news he had to tell Fudge Shaw, and hoping beyond everything that he would be fortunate enough to meet with that youth before the bell rang. He wasn't, however, and not until the noon hour did he find a chance to unburden himself. Then, while he and Fudge, together with some two hundred other boys—not to mention an even larger number of girls—sat on the coping around the school grounds and ate their luncheons, he eagerly, almost breathlessly, recounted the story of what he had seen.

Fudge was plainly impressed, and he asked any number of searching and seemingly purposeless

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questions, but in the end he appeared a little disappointed. "It doesn't seem," he said, "that he'd show himself like that if he's what we think he is. Unless, of course, he's doing it for a bluff; to avert suspicion, you know."

Perry nodded.

"He doesn't look much like a criminal," he said doubtfully. "He's sort of nice-looking, Fudge."

"Lots of the best of 'em are," was the sententious reply. "Look at—oh, lots of 'em! Remember the crook in that movie play last month, the fellow who forged things?"

"Jim the Penman? Yes, but he was only an actor, Fudge."

"Makes no difference. Those plays are true to life, Perry. That's why they got that good-looking chap to act that part, don't you see? That's one of the most suspicious things about this fellow. He's too good-looking, too innocent, don't you see? He's probably an awfully clever cracksman, Perry."

"Maybe," replied the other hopefully. "What do you suppose he was so interested in the paper for?"

Fudge frowned thoughtfully as he conveyed the last morsel of a generous sandwich to his mouth. "You can't tell. Maybe he was looking to see if the police were on his track. Or maybe——"

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But the bell cut short further speculation and, agreeing to meet after school, they went back to the drudgery of learning. Perry had not had time to ask Fudge what plan of procedure the latter had decided on, a fact which interfered sadly with his work during the final session. As it developed later, however, Fudge had not decided on the best manner in which to continue the relentless pursuit of the criminal. As they made their way to the athletic field Fudge talked a great deal on the subject but, to Perry's disappointment, didn't seem to arrive anywhere. It would be necessary, thought Fudge, to do a good deal of watching before they could obtain enough evidence in the case. What they ought to do, he declared, was to shadow the safe-breaker and never let him out of their sight. But this, as Perry pointed out, was rather impractical, considering that they had to spend most of the day in school. Whereupon Fudge reminded him that Saturday was coming.

"We'll have the whole day then. The only thing I'm afraid of is that he will pull it off before that and make his getaway. And, of course, if we want to get the reward we've got to collar him before that."

"Reward?" echoed Perry. "What reward?"

"Why, the reward for his apprehension."

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"How do you know there's any reward?"

"I don't *know* it, but it stands to reason, doesn't it, that there is one? If that fellow's wanted somewhere there's sure to be a reward out for him, and a description and all. I wish I knew how much it is!"

"How much do you suppose?" asked Perry.

"Oh, maybe five hundred dollars, maybe a thousand. It depends, you see, on how much swag he got away with on his last job. Maybe he killed someone. You can't tell. Burglars are desperate folks when they're interrupted."

"I don't think he'd kill anyone," said Perry. "He doesn't look that sort."

Fudge, though, shook his head unconvincedly. "You can't tell," he said. "Anyway, if he has, the reward's bound to be bigger. You keep your eyes peeled, Perry, and watch that window closely. I wouldn't be surprised if you discovered something mighty important in the next day or two. He must be getting pretty nearly ready to do something."

"You don't think, then, he has an accomplice?" asked Perry.

"No, I don't. He sort of looks like a man who'd work on his own hook. It's lots safer, you see, and he has a pretty wise face."

There, for the time being, the subject had to be

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abandoned, for they had reached the field and confidential conversation was no longer possible.

Not only the baseball candidates were out to-day but some forty-odd aspirants for positions on the Track Team. These were clustered at the further side of the inclosure where the coach and trainer, "Skeet" Presser, were, rather dubiously it seemed, looking them over. Guy Felker, eighteen years of age and a senior, was captain this year, and Arthur Beaton was manager. Beaton was checking off the candidates from a list he held and Captain Felker was inquiring of no one in particular "where the rest of them were." Sixty-four names had gone down on the notice-board in the school corridor and only forty-four had shown up. "Skeet" explained the absence of a number of the delinquents by reminding Guy that fellows couldn't practice baseball and report for track work both. Guy consented to become slightly mollified, and, Manager Beaton having completed his checking, the coach and trainer took charge.

"Skeet" was a slight, wiry man of some thirty years, with a homely, good-natured countenance and a pair of very sharp and shrewd black eyes. He had been in his time a professional one- and two-miler of prominence, but of late years had made a business of training. He was regularly employed

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by the Clearfield Young Men's Christian Association, but his duties there did not occupy all his time and for three seasons he had coached and trained the High School athletes, and with a fair measure of success, since during his régime Clearfield had once won overwhelmingly from her rival, Springdale, had once been beaten decisively and had once lost the meeting by a bare three points. This year, if Guy Felker could have his way, the purple of Clearfield was to wave in gorgeous triumph over the blue of Springdale.

The trouble was, however, that after the last defeat by her rival Clearfield High School had rather lost enthusiasm for track and field sports. The pendulum swung far over toward baseball, and this spring it had been more than usually difficult to persuade fellows to come out for the Track Team. Felker had posted notice after notice calling for volunteers before his insistence had stirred up any response. Of course there was a nucleus in the hold-overs from last season, but they were not many and new material was badly needed if the Purple was to make a real showing against the Blue. Within the last week the list on the notice-board had grown encouragingly in length, though, and with a half-hundred candidates to choose from it would seem that coach and captain

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should have been encouraged. Unfortunately, though, a good half of the aspirants were youngsters whose chances of making good were decidedly slim, and "Skeet" and Guy Felker both realized that if, after the final weeding out, they had twenty-five fellows to build the team with they might consider themselves extremely fortunate.

At least half of the candidates who reported this afternoon were in street togs. Those who were not were taken by Guy for a slow run out into the country and the others were dismissed with instructions to report to-morrow dressed for work. Of the former were Fudge and Perry, and it was their fortune to amble over the better part of two miles at the tail-end of a strung-out procession of runners. Perry was in the rear because Fudge was. Fudge was there because running was not a strong point with him. If it hadn't been for the occasional rests allowed by the captain, Fudge would have dropped out, discouraged and winded, long before they got back to the field. As it was, however, he managed to remain within sight of the leaders. Once when, having trotted up a hill, he subsided on a convenient ledge to regain his breath, he voiced a protest.

"Gee," panted Fudge, "I don't see any good in running all over the landscape like this when you're

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going to be a shot-putter! If I'd known they were going to spring this on me I wouldn't have signed for the team!"

"I guess maybe it's good for you," replied Perry, "whether you're going to throw weights or run or jump. Hadn't we better start along again? The others are nearly a quarter of a mile away now."

Fudge lifted a dejected head and viewed the situation. His face brightened. "They're going around the hill, Perry," he said. "That's all right. We'll just trot down this side and pick 'em up again at the road."

Perry wanted to demur at that, but Fudge's discomfort was so real that he had to sympathize, and so they cut off to the right and reached the bottom of the hill shortly after the first runners had passed. There were many knowing grins as the two boys trotted out from the fringe of trees.

"Did you lose your way?" asked one chap solicitously.

"No, I lost my breath," replied Fudge. "Had to stop and look for it."

"'And for numerous other reasons,'" remarked a voice behind him.

Fudge glanced back with a scowl, but every face in sight was guileless and innocent.

Later, when they were making their way home

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from the field, Fudge pulled his feet after him wearily and groaned every few yards.

"I'll be as stiff as a crutch to-morrow," he sighed pessimistically. "F-f-for two cents I'd tell Guy to find someone else to put his old shot for him. I d-d-didn't agree to be a b-b-b-blooming slave!"

Still, he managed to drag himself around to Perry's after supper and until it was time for the theater to open they watched the window across the yard. But they saw nothing, not even a light. Fudge feared that their quarry had flown and accused Perry of scaring him away. "He probably saw you watching him and has skipped out. Bet we'll never see him again!"

"But I'm quite sure he didn't see me," expostulated the other. "He didn't look up once."

"That's what you think. He must have seen you. Well, there goes five hundred dollars!"

"You don't even know there was any reward for him, so what's the good of grouching about it?"

But Fudge refused to cheer up and presently took his departure gloomily. It is very easy to be a pessimist when one is weary, and Fudge was very weary indeed!

CHAPTER VIII

LANNY STUDIES STEAM ENGINEERING

THEY were putting down a two-block stretch of new macadam on the Lafayette Street extension. A bed of cracked stone, freshly sprinkled, was receiving the weighty attention of the town's biggest steam roller as Lanny White strolled around the corner. *Chug-chug-chug! Scrunch-scrunch-scrunch!* Lanny paused, hands in pockets, and looked on. Back and forth went the roller, the engineer skillfully edging it toward the center of the road at the end of each trip. Further down the street, where the workmen were tearing up the old dirt surface, a second and much smaller roller stood idle, its boiler simmering and purring. Lanny smiled.

"Me for the little one," he muttered, as he walked toward the smaller roller. The engineer was a huge, good-natured looking Irishman with a bristling red mustache, so large that he quite dwarfed the machine. He had a bunch of dirty cotton waste in

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his hand and, apparently for the want of something better to do, was rubbing it here and there about the engine. He looked up as Lanny came to a stop alongside, met Lanny's smile and smiled back. Then he absent-mindedly mopped his face with the bunch of waste, without, however, appreciable effect, and leaned against the roller.

"Gettin' warm," he volunteered.

Lanny nodded, casting his eyes interestedly over the engine.

"I should think that would be a pretty warm job in hot weather," he observed conversationally.

"'Tis so. Put eighty or ninety pounds o' shtame in her an' she throws out the hate somethin' fierce."

"She's smaller than the other one, isn't she?"

"Yep. We use this one for the sidewalk work gin'rally. But she's good for tearin' up when she's the spikes in her."

"Spikes?" asked Lanny.

"Thim things." The man picked up a steel spike some eight inches long from the floor and showed Lanny how it was fixed in one of the numerous holes bored in the surface of the roller. After that Lanny's curiosity led to all sorts of questions. At the engineer's invitation he mounted the platform and, under instruction, moved the roller backwards and forwards and altered its course by the steering

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wheel and peered into the glowing furnace under the boiler and listened to an exposition on the subject of getting up steam and the purposes of the steam and water gauges. The engineer was a willing teacher and Lanny an apt pupil, and they both enjoyed themselves.

“And what do you do with it at night?” asked Lanny innocently. “Do you leave it here and put the fire out?”

“Lave it here, yes, but I don’t put the fire out, lad. I just bank it down, d’you see, an’ thin in the mornin’ I just rake her out a bit and throw some more coal in and there she is.”

“Oh, I see. And how much steam does she have to have to work on?”

“Depends. Sixty pounds’ll carry her along on a level strate, but you have to give her more on a grade.”

“It’s quite interesting,” said Lanny. “And thanks for explaining it to me.”

“Sure, that’s all right,” replied the other good-naturedly. “Maybe, though, you’ll be afther my job first thing I know.” He winked humorously.

Lanny smiled and shook his head. “I guess I’d be afraid to try to run one of those alone,” he said. “It looks pretty difficult. How was it, now, I started it before?”

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"Wid this." The engineer tugged gently at the lever. "Try it again if you like."

So Lanny stepped back on the platform and rolled the machine a few yards up the road and back again and seemed quite pleased and proud. Nevertheless he still denied that he would have the courage to try to do it alone. "I guess I'd better start in and work up," he said smilingly. "Maybe I could get the job of night watchman for a beginning. I suppose there is a watchman, isn't there?"

"There's two or three of them."

Lanny tried not to let his disappointment show. "That's what I'll do then," he laughed. "And if I get cold I'll sit here by your boiler."

"Oh, there's no watchman on this job," said the other carelessly. "We just put the lanterns up. That's enough. It's only where there's a good dale of travelin' that they do be havin' the watchman on the job. Well, here's where we get busy. Come along, you ould teakettle. The boss wants you. So long, lad."

The little roller rumbled off up the road and Lanny, whistling softly, wandered back the way he had come, stopping here and there to watch operations. But once around the corner he no longer dawdled. He set out at his best pace instead, went a block westward and one northward

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and presently reached his destination, a house at the corner of Troutman and B Streets. Dick Lovering's blue runabout was in front of the gate and Dick himself was sitting on the porch with Gordon Merrick. Gordon was a clean-cut, live-looking boy of sixteen, a clever first-baseman and an equally clever left end. He and Dick were close friends. They had evidently been awaiting Lanny's appearance, for they spied him the moment he came into sight and before he had reached the gate Gordon called eagerly: "All right, Lanny?"

"Fine! I'm the best little chauffeur in the Street Department!"

"Better not talk so loudly," cautioned Dick. "Do you have to have a license to run it?"

Lanny chuckled. "I guess so, but I've lost mine. Say, fellows, it's dead easy!" He seated himself on the top step and fanned himself with his cap. April was surprising Clearfield with a week of abnormally warm weather and this Saturday morning was the warmest of all. "The chap was awfully decent to me. It seems rather a shame to take him in the way I did. He let me get on it and run it and showed me all about it. Why, all you have to do——" And thereupon Lanny went into technical details with enthusiasm and explained until Gordon shut him off.

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"That'll be about all, Lanny," said Gordon. "As you're going to attend to the chauffeuring we don't need to know all the secrets. All we want to know is, can it be done?"

"Of course! I'm telling you——"

"You're spouting a lot of rot about steam pressure and gauges," interrupted Gordon firmly. "That's your business, not ours. We're only passengers and——"

"Leave me out," laughed Dick. "I refuse to ride on anything that Lanny's running, even a street roller."

"There won't any of you ride," said Lanny. "You'll walk. And one of you had better go ahead and carry a lantern in case we meet anything on the way."

"Oh, shucks, it's got a whistle, hasn't it?"

"Maybe, but I'm not going to blow it if it has, you silly idiot!"

"Much obliged! Well, do we do it to-night or do we not?"

"We do. The journey will start at nine sharp."

"Hadn't we better wait until later?" asked Dick. "We don't want to run into the Superintendent of Streets or the fellow you were talking to."

"There's no one out that way at night. There are only four or five houses around there, anyway.

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We can take it to that first new cross street, whatever its name is, and then back by Common Street to the field. We won't meet a soul. Besides, it's going to take some time to go all over that ground with the thing. It's slower than Dick's run-about!"

"Cast no aspersions on Eli," warned Dick. "We might have a race, you and I, eh? You in your—what make is it, by the way?"

Lanny chuckled. "Well, it's not very big," he said, "and so I guess maybe it's a Ford!"

"Who's going along with us?" Gordon asked.

"Just Way. Seeing that he's manager——"

"Yes, and we may need someone along whose dad has a little money in case we get caught! Will you fellows come here, then, about nine?"

"You'd better leave me out of it," said Dick. "I'm willing to share the responsibility but I wouldn't be any use to you. I'm an awful blunderer when I try to stump around in the dark."

"You could go in Eli," said Gordon, "and take me along."

"Nothing doing! You'll walk ahead and lug the lantern," declared Lanny. "There's no reason why Dick should bother to come. Besides, if there did happen to be any trouble about it afterwards, he'd be much better out of it. A football coach isn't

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much use if he's serving a year or two in prison."

"What do you suppose they would do to us if they found out?" asked Gordon thoughtfully.

"Oh, who cares?" Lanny laughed gaily. "After all, we aren't stealing the thing; we're just borrowing it."

"I guess Ned Burns would intercede with his stern uncle if we were found out," said Dick. "It might be a good idea to take Ned along!" he added with a laugh.

"Ned nothing!" Gordon's tone was contemptuous. "Ned would get in front of the old thing and get flattened out, like as not. Something would happen to him surely. He can't walk around the corner without breaking a leg!"

"What's the matter with him now?" asked Lanny interestedly. "Some fellow told me he was laid up again."

"Didn't you hear? Why, he was standing on a crossing on Common Street one day last week and an automobile came along and ran over his foot! Everyone around declared that the chap in the auto blew his horn loud enough to wake the dead. But it didn't wake Ned!"

"Hurt him much?" asked Lanny, laughing.

"Broke a bone in one toe, they say. Honest, I saw Ned walk along G Street one day last winter

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and run into exactly three hydrants! He's a wonder!"

"He certainly is! And I guess we'd better leave Ned at home. Three of us are enough, anyway. What time does the moon show up to-night?"

"It hasn't told me," replied Gordon gravely.

"Well, we'll need it to see what we're doing. About ten, though, I think. Is that twelve o'clock striking? Gee, I must run along. I promised my mother I'd dig up a flower bed this morning. See you later, fellows."

"Wait a second and I'll drop you around there," said Dick, reaching for his crutches. "By the way, Gordie, if you see Way tell him not to forget to stop and get half a dozen new balls. I told him yesterday, but he's likely to forget it. And don't you forget that practice is at two-thirty to-day!"

"Ay, ay, sir! Can we have a game to-day, Dick?"

"Yes, but I want a good hour's work beforehand. Turn her over, will you, Lanny? I'm going to have a self-starter put on her some day if I can find the money."

Eli Yale, that being the full name of the blue runabout, rolled out of sight up B Street toward Lanny's home and Gordon, reminded by Lanny's remark of his own duties in the way of gardening,

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descended the porch and passed around the side of the house toward the shed in search of a spade. As he came in sight of the apple tree in the next yard he glanced inquiringly toward the platform. It was, however, empty.

“I wonder,” muttered Gordon, “where Fudge is keeping himself. I haven’t seen him around for almost a week.”

Could he have caught sight of his neighbor at that moment he would probably have been somewhat surprised.

CHAPTER IX

THE NEW SIGN

QUIT wobbling!" hissed Fudge.

"All right, but hurry up," returned Perry in a hoarse whisper. "See anything?"

"N-no, nothing much. There's a table—what's that?"

Fudge stopped abruptly and listened. Footfalls sounded in the hall below and, releasing his clutch on the ledge of the transom, Fudge wriggled from Perry's supporting arms and descended to the floor.

"Someone's coming!" he whispered. "Beat it!"

They "beat it" into the empty room across the corridor just as the intruder's head came into sight above the landing. Fudge, watching through the crack of the partly-open door, beheld a man in overalls carrying a square of black tin. He passed on to the door they had just retreated from, set down his box, pushed a battered derby hat to the back of his head and regarded the portal thought-

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fully. Finally he produced an awl, a screwdriver and some screws from different pockets and proceeded to attach the square of tin to the middle panel. The conspirators watched with vast curiosity. There was printing on the tin, but not until the man had completed his task and gone were they able to read it. Then they stole out and regarded the sign interestedly. This is what they saw:

MYRON ADDICKS, CIVIL ENGINEER

They viewed each other questioningly and doubtfully.

“Civil Engineer,” mused Fudge. “That’s a funny game. Of course, that isn’t his real name.”

“Let’s get out of here,” said Perry uneasily. “He might come back.”

They went down the stairs and emerged on the sidewalk after Fudge had peered cautiously from the doorway. “I suppose,” muttered Fudge, “we oughtn’t to be seen together. He may be watching from across the street somewhere.” He viewed

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the windows of the opposite stores and houses suspiciously but without result. In another minute they were seated on Perry's front steps.

"What did you see through the transom?" asked Perry.

"Nothing much. There's a cot bed in one corner with a screen around it, and a table with a lot of books and things on it, and a funny table with a sloping top, and a little table near the window, and two or three chairs——" Fudge paused, searching his memory. "That's all, I guess. There's a closet in the corner across from the bed, though. And, oh, yes, there was a trunk near the door. I could just see the edge of it. I'll bet if we could get a look in that trunk we'd find evidence enough, all right!"

"But—but if he's really a civil engineer," objected Perry, "maybe we're all wrong about him."

Fudge jeered. "What would a civil engineer be doing playing a piano in a movie theater? And why would he wear a false mustache? Or dress up like a cowboy? He's no more of a civil engineer than I am!"

"Myron's an unusual name," mused Perry.

"You wouldn't expect him to call himself John Smith, would you? Folks would suspect right away that it was a—an assumed name. He's foxy, that.

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chap. I'll just bet you anything that he's a regular top-notch! And I'll bet there's a whaling big reward out for him, too!"

"Well, I don't see that we've found out very much to-day," said Perry. "We've been after him ever since half-past eight, and all we know is that he calls himself 'Myron Addicks, Civil Engineer' and has a trunk and a bed and three tables in his room."

"That's a whole lot," replied Fudge emphatically. "That sign proves that he's a faker, doesn't it?"

"Well, it doesn't exactly *prove* it," returned the other.

"Of course it does! You don't suppose anyone really ever had such a name as 'Myron Addicks,' do you? And I guess you never saw a civil engineer playing a piano in a theater, did you? And what about the disguise?"

There was no getting around the disguise, and Perry hedged. "Well, anyway, we've got to find out more than we have yet, Fudge."

"Oh, we'll find things out all right. And I guess we've got plenty of time. That sign shows that he means to hang around here awhile, you see. If he was going to crack a safe within a few days he wouldn't go to all that trouble. I guess

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he's about as slick as they make them. Say, what time is it? I've got to get home!"

"About half-past twelve. Do we have to do any more shadowing this afternoon?"

Fudge shook his head. "No, he'll be in the theater from two to half-past four. Anyway, I've got to think over the new evidence before we go on. We—we've got to proceed very carefully. If he should suspect anything—well, it might go hard with us."

"I wish," said Perry dubiously, "we could find out if there really is a reward out for him. Only, if there was, I don't suppose we could get it."

"Why couldn't we?" demanded Fudge warmly. "All we'd have to do would be to go to the police and say: 'Come across with the reward and we'll lead you to your man!' That's all we'd have to do. Of course I could go to the police station and ask what rewards are out, but, you see, that might make them suspicious. All they'd have to do would be to shadow us and find out about him and—bing!—good-night, reward!" Fudge shook his head. "We won't give them any chance to do us out of it. Well, so long. Going out to the field this afternoon?"

"Are you?"

Fudge nodded. "Guess so. Come on and watch

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practice. Maybe they'll have a game to-day. Stop for me about two, will you?"

Perry agreed and Fudge took himself off, for once neglecting to proceed along the street with his usual caution. If an enemy had been lurking behind one of the maple trees, Fudge would have stood a poor chance of escape! Perry dragged his tired feet into the house and up the stairs, reflecting that this game of shadowing was far more wearying than the long, slow runs that had fallen to his lot the last three days. He was very thankful that work for the track candidates was to be omitted this afternoon.

However, he felt better after dinner and sitting in the sun on the stand with Fudge and watching baseball practice was not a very wearing occupation. Dick Lovering put the fellows through a good hour of batting and fielding and then picked two teams from the more promising material and let them play five innings. Tom Haley was in the box for the First Team and Tom Nostrand pitched for the Second. The First was made up about as everyone expected it would be, with Captain Jones at shortstop, Lanny catching, Gordon Merrick on first, Harry Bryan on second, Will Scott on third, George Cotner in left field, Pete Farrar in center and Joe Browne in right. Bert Cable umpired. A

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hundred or more fellows had come out to the field to look on, attracted by the rumor of a line-up, and they were rewarded by a very scrappy, hard-fought, contest. There were many errors, but, as they were fairly apportioned to each team, they added to rather than detracted from the interest.

The Scrubs tied the score up in the third when Lanny, seeking to kill off a runner at second, threw the ball two yards to the left of base and two tallies came in. At four runs each the game went into the last of the fourth inning. Then an error by the Second Team's first-baseman, followed by a wild throw to third by catcher, brought Gordon Merrick in and placed the First Team in the lead. And there it stayed, for, although the Second started a rally in their half of the fifth and managed to get men on first and second bases with but one out, Tom Haley settled down and fanned the next batsman and brought the game to an end by causing his rival in the points, Tom Nostrand, to pop up an easy fly to Warner Jones.

Before Fudge and Perry were out of sight of the field Dick's runabout sped past with Gordon Merrick beside the driver and Curtis Wayland perched on the floor with his knees doubled up under his chin. The occupants of the car waved and Way shouted something that Perry didn't catch.

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"What did he say?" Perry asked as the car sped around the corner.

"I don't know," muttered Fudge. "He's a fresh kid, anyway."

Fudge, however, was not quite truthful, for Way's remark had reached him very clearly.

"I thought," said Perry innocently, "he said something about the springs."

Fudge viewed him suspiciously, but, discovering his countenance apparently free of guile, only grunted.

In the runabout the three boys were discussing the afternoon's performance. "It didn't go badly for a first game," hazarded Way. "But wasn't that a weird peg of Lanny's?"

"There were several weird things about that game," said Gordon. "My hitting was one of them. We'll have to do better next Saturday if we're going to beat Norrisville."

"Who said we were going to?" asked Dick mildly.

Gordon laughed. "Well, then, give them a fight," he corrected.

"Oh, we'll do that, I guess," Dick replied. "Another week of practice will make a difference. We'll get rid of some of the crowd about Wednesday and then we'll have room to turn around out there.

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Warner thinks we ought to keep two full nines for the First, but I don't see the use of it if we have the Second to play with. What do you think?"

"No use at all," said Way. "Just a lot of sore-heads sitting around on the bench and kicking because they can't play every minute. Besides, there aren't enough good ball players in the lot to make three teams."

"No, I don't think there are. That's what I told Warner. He wanted to pick out eighteen or twenty and then make up the Second from what was left."

"A peach of a Second it would be," jeered Gordon.

"I guess we'll stick to last year's idea," continued the coach, "and keep about sixteen fellows, including pitchers. I wish, by the way, we had another good twirler. We'll have to find one somewhere."

"Joe Browne can pitch a little, Dick," Way suggested. "You might see what you can do with him. He hasn't got much, I guess, but a pretty fair straight ball and a sort of out-curve, but he might learn."

"All right, we'll see what we can do with him. A player who can work in the field and the box too is a pretty handy chap to have around. If he can do well enough to start some of the early games

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we won't have to keep more than fifteen players. Here you are, Way. Everything all right for to-night?"

"I guess so. Lanny's going to leave the big gate open so we can get the thing in. I hope he doesn't forget it. I'll call him up at supper time and find out. Sure you don't want to come along, Dick?"

"Quite sure. I'd only be in the way. And you'll have plenty without me. Good luck to you. Don't get caught!"

"If we do we'll get you to bail us out," laughed Way, as he swung the gate to behind him. "Nine o'clock sharp, Gordon!"

Gordon nodded and the car went on again. "I'm rather afraid you'll get nabbed," remarked Dick. "But I don't suppose anyone would be nasty about it. If I were you fellows I'd cut and run, Gordie, if anything happened."

"I suppose we will," Gordon replied. "If we do I hope Lanny will turn off the engine before he jumps!"

"Well, drop around in the morning and let me hear about it," said the other as Gordon jumped out at his gate. "If I don't see an announcement of your arrest in the paper I'll take it that you got through all right."

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“You won’t see any announcement of my arrest,” laughed Gordon. “I can run faster than any cop on the force, Dick!”

“Well, see that you do! So long!”

CHAPTER X

THE BORROWED ROLLER

SOME twelve years before a large tract of marsh and meadow lying west of the town and southeast of the river where it turns toward the sea had been purchased by Mr. Jonathan Brent. At the time no one conceived that any of the land except possibly a few blocks just beyond A Street would ever be marketable as residence lots. But Mr. Brent had gradually filled in, driving back the twisting creeks that meandered about the land, until many acres had been redeemed. Several new streets were laid out and Mr. Brent, retaining for his own occupancy a full block between Sawyer and Troutman Streets, had built himself a very handsome residence. "Brentwood" was quite the finest mansion in Clearfield. When finished it was two blocks beyond the westernmost house in town, but it did not remain so long. Brent's Addition proved popular and many citizens bought lots there and built, in some cases abandoning homes in the mid-

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dle of town that were already being elbowed by business blocks. Between Main and Common Streets, three blocks north of "Brentwood," two squares had been left undivided and this ground was now the High School Athletic Field. West of that, building had not progressed to any great extent as yet, although a few houses were scattered about the recently-made area. It was in this locality at about half-past nine that Saturday night Lanny, Gordon, Way and one other found the street rollers.

The fourth member of the expedition was Morris Brent. Morris, it seemed, had recalled the fact that he had left a tennis racket and some balls on the court at the side of the house and had gone out to bring them in. On his return he had chanced to look toward the front gate and had glimpsed the three figures going west along Troutman Street. There was nothing extraordinary about that, but Morris had been impressed with a certain stealthiness displayed by the trio, and had also caught sight of a tow head under the dim light of a street lamp. Thereupon Morris had abandoned racket and balls on the front steps and hastened after the conspirators, finding that his surmise as to the identity of the light-haired youth was correct. His advent was welcomed, the purpose of the expedi-

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tion explained to him and the trio became a quartette.

Save Morris not a person was glimpsed from Gordon's house to their destination. The only person they were likely to meet was the policeman on that beat, and, since he had to cover a deal of territory, and was known to have a partiality for the better lighted district nearest town, the boys considered their chances of evading him were excellent. Making certain that there was no watchman about, they approached the smaller of the two rollers and considered it. It would have to be turned around and run back a half-block to the next street, north two blocks and then east to the Common Street side of the athletic field. The first difficulty that presented itself was that, contrary to the statement of the engineer, the fire under the boiler was not banked. In fact, there was very little fire there. This was explained by Morris. Being Saturday, he said, the engineers had left their fires to go out so they would not have to tend them until Monday morning.

"Isn't that the dickens?" asked Lanny. He lifted down a red lantern that hung from the engine and dubiously examined the steam gauge. "About ten pounds," he muttered. "She won't stir a step on that!"

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"Guess, then, we'd better try it some other time," said Way.

"No, sir, we're going to do it to-night," responded Lanny, after a moment's consideration. "If we wait until the first of the week the field may dry off, and we want to roll it while it's still moist. The only thing to do is to get this fire going and make steam. It'll take some time, but we can do it."

"Easy," agreed Morris. Being newly admitted to the conspiracy, Morris was filled with enthusiasm. "Set the lantern down, Lanny, and I'll shovel some coal on."

"All right. I'll rake it a bit first, though." This was done and then, from the bin, Morris got several shovelfuls of soft coal and sprinkled it gingerly over the dying fire. Drafts were opened and the quartette sat down to wait. Fortunately, the night was fairly warm, otherwise the ensuing period might have been distinctly unpleasant, for this newer part of Brent's Addition was beautifully level, and what breeze was stirring came across the land unimpeded by anything larger than the two-inch shade trees along the incipient sidewalks. They talked in low tones, keeping a careful watch meanwhile for the policeman. The last street light was at the end of the block and so, save for the lanterns

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left by the workmen, they were in the darkness. Lanny, though, pointed to the sky back of the town. "The moon's coming up," he said, "and I'd like mighty well to be inside the field before it gets in its work."

"Same here," agreed Gordon. The next instant he uttered a cautioning "*S-s-sh!*" and flattened himself out against the side of the roller. Half a block away the officer on the beat had suddenly emerged from the shadows and was standing under the light, gazing, as it seemed to the boys, most interestedly toward them. There was a minute of suspense. "Think he saw us?" whispered Gordon.

"Search me," said Lanny. "I wish we'd had the sense to put the lantern back on the other side where we got it. Here he comes!"

The officer had begun a slow but determined approach.

"Keep in the shadows," advised Lanny, "and beat it back to the other roller! Don't let him see you!"

Silently, like four indistinct shadows, the boys slipped from their places and, keeping as best they could the dark bulk of the roller between them and the approaching policeman, scuttled up the road to where the larger machine stood. There was one doubtful moment when the light of the red lantern

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fell upon them just before they dodged behind the big roller.

"He will see the fire and know that something's up," whispered Way. "Let's skip, fellows!"

"Hold on a minute," advised Lanny. "Maybe he won't. Wait and see."

They peered anxiously around the edges of the big wheel behind which they were hidden. The policeman was dimly visible as he walked about the smaller roller. Finally he stopped and swung his stick a moment, picked up the red lantern and set it in the road beside the machine and, at last, slowly ambled back along the street. Breathlessly and hopefully they watched him reach the corner and disappear without a backward look. For a long two minutes after that they listened to the sound of his footsteps dying away on the new granolithic sidewalk. Then:

"Saved!" murmured Morris dramatically.

"Come on," said Lanny. "We'll have to get that old shebang going even if we have to push it! The moon will be up in a few minutes."

When they got back there was an encouraging purring sound from the engine and, without disturbing the lantern, Lanny borrowed a match from Morris and read the gauge. "Forty-something," he muttered as the light flickered out. "We'll try

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her, anyway. Sneak back there to the corner, Gordon, and see if you can hear or see anything of the cop. And hurry back. I'll get her swung around, anyway."

Gordon scouted off and Lanny, while the other two boys held their breath anxiously, pulled a lever here, pushed something there and turned the wheel. There was a hiss, a jar, a *clank* and a rumble and the roller slowly moved away from the curbing.

"She starts, she moves, she seems to feel
The thrill of life along her keel!"

murmured Morris poetically as Lanny sought excitedly for the reversing lever in the darkness. The roller stopped suddenly and as suddenly began to back. Way, who had followed close behind, had just time to jump aside with a suppressed yelp before the ponderous machine struck the curb with an alarming jolt.

"Keep her head down!" exclaimed Morris. "Don't let her throw you, Lanny!"

"Give me that lantern up here," panted the amateur engineer. "I can't see what I'm doing."

Way handed the lantern to him and he hung it on a projection in front of him. After that progress was less erratic. It required much maneuvering to

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get the roller headed the other way, but Lanny at last accomplished the difficult feat. Gordon returned to report that all was quiet. More coal was put into the furnace and the journey begun. Lanny's plan to have someone walk ahead with a lantern was abandoned. Instead the light was put out and Lanny trusted to the faint radiance of the moon which was not yet quite above the house-tops. The corner was negotiated without difficulty and the Flying Juggernaut, as Gordon dubbed the machine, swung into a smooth, newly-surfaced street over which she moved easily if not silently. Gordon and Morris strode ahead to watch for obstructions and give warning while Way, as a sort of rear guard, remained behind in case pursuit appeared from that direction.

What each of the four marveled at was why the entire town did not turn out to discover the reason for the appalling noise! Perhaps the sound of the steam roller's passage was not as deafening as they imagined, but to them it seemed that the thumping and rattling and groaning could easily be heard on the other side of town! If it was, though, nothing came of it. Slowly but with a sort of blind inexorability quite awesome the Juggernaut proceeded on her way. Lanny, his hand on the lever that would bring her to a stop, stood at his

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post like a hero, ready, however, to cut and run at the first alarm. It seemed the better part of an hour to him before the two blocks were traversed and Morris came back to announce that Common Street was reached. Over went the wheel and the Flying Juggernaut, grazing the curbing with a nerve-destroying rasp of steel against stone, turned toward the side entrance of the field. On the left now were several houses. Lights shone from windows. The boys held their breath as the last leg of the journey began. Suppose that, hearing the noise and viewing the unusual sight of a steam roller parading through the street at half-past ten o'clock, some busy-body should telephone to the police station! Morris didn't like to think of it, and so, naturally, he mentioned it to Gordon. Gordon assured him that the contingency had already occurred to him and that if he saw a front door open he meant to disappear from the scene with unprecedented celerity, or words to that effect!

But the suspense ended at last, for there, on the right, a break in the shadowed darkness of the high fence, was the open gate. Lanny swung the roller far to the left and turned toward the entrance. Then, however, a problem confronted them, which was how to get it over the curbing! They hadn't planned for that. The sidewalk was a good

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six inches above the street level, and, bringing the Juggernaut to a stop—the sudden silence was absolutely uncanny!—Lanny invited ideas. Morris offered the desperate plan of backing the roller to the far side of the street and putting on all steam. “Sort of lift her over, Lanny,” he urged. Lanny told him he was an idiot; that this thing was a steam roller and not a horse. In the end Morris, Way and Gordon went inside to look for planks or beams to lay along the curb, while Lanny, not too contented with his task, remained to guard the roller. They were gone a long time, or so, at least, it seemed to the engineer, but returned at last with enough lumber of varying lengths and thicknesses to answer the purpose. In the light of the inquiring moon, which was now sailing well above the tree-tops, they snuggled the planks and joists against the curbing, forming an abrupt but practical runway, and, giving the Juggernaut all the steam there was, Lanny persuaded her to take the incline and to roll majestically through the gate and into the field. No sooner was she inside than Gordon swung the gate shut and secured it, and four boys, with one accord, drew four long, deep-drawn breaths of relief!

CHAPTER XI

GORDON DESERTS HIS POST

AFTER that they listened cautiously, but heard only the soft sizzling of the engine which had a contented sound as though the Flying Juggernaut was quite as rejoiced at the successful outcome of the venture as they were! More coal was put on, the grate was raked and Lanny contentedly announced that there was a sixty-pound head of steam on. By this time the field was bathed in moonlight save where the stands cast their black shadows, and the task remaining could not fail for lack of light. Forward moved the Juggernaut and there began the work of smoothing out the inequalities of Brent Field. Perhaps had Lanny realized the size of the task he would never have ventured on it. Back and forth, commencing at the infield end, rumbled and clanked the roller, each time covering some four feet of sward and gravel. An hour passed and they were still only as far as first and third base. Gordon voiced doubts.

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"At this rate, Lanny, we won't reach the fence back there before breakfast time. Can't you make her go any faster?"

"No, I can't," replied the engineer shortly, "and if you don't like the way I'm doing this suppose you take a whack at it yourself."

"No, thanks. I'd probably run her right through the stand over there. I'm not criticising your handling of the thing, Lanny, but it's getting a bit chilly and I'm sleepy and——"

"Go on home then. I guess I can do this all right alone."

"Well, don't be grouchy," said Way. "After all, you're the only one of us who's getting any fun out of it. Just walking back and forth like this isn't awfully exciting. Gee, I wish I had my sweater!"

"Tell you what," said Morris. "I'll beat it down town and get some hot coffee!"

"Oh, noble youth!" applauded Gordon. "Get a gallon of it, Morris! And some sandwiches——"

"Or hot-dogs," interpolated Way.

"With plenty of mustard!"

"Who's got any money? I don't think I've got more than fifteen or twenty cents. Dig down, fellows."

They "dug" and a minute later Morris was on

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his way with the sufficient sum of eighty cents jingling in his pocket. Cheered by the anticipation of hot coffee and food, the others were restored to good humor. Lanny said he guessed the old concern would get along just as fast if they all got on it. They tried it and could see no difference in the rate of progress, and being near the boiler was a lot warmer than walking along in the little breeze that had come up with the moon. At Gordon's suggestion, Lanny instructed him in running the machine and, after a few trips back and forth, he took Lanny's place at the throttle while the latter was glad to get down and stretch his legs. They completed the diamond and started on the outfield. Lanny declared that the work was a huge success, that the ground where they had rolled was as hard and level as a billiard table.

"Of course," he added, "it would be a lot better if we could go over it two or three times."

"Maybe," said Gordon hurriedly, "but we're not going over it two or three times, you simple idiot! Once is enough. My folks hate to have me late for breakfast!"

"One good thing," said Way, "is that to-morrow—no, to-day—is Sunday and we have breakfast later."

"So do we," replied Gordon, "but I'm wondering

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if I can sneak in without being caught. Wish I'd thought to unlock the porch window. I supposed we'd be all done this by twelve!"

"If we get it done by four we'll be lucky, I guess," said Lanny. "There comes Morris."

"I could only get a quart," panted Morris as he came up. "The chap in the lunch wagon was afraid he'd run short if he gave me any more. Here are some paper cups; got those at the drug store. And here's your grub; eight ham and three hot-dog sandwiches."

"Three?" ejaculated Gordon.

"Yes, I ate one on the way. Stop your old pushcart till we feed."

"Better keep her going," said Lanny. "We can eat *en voyage*."

"Didn't get any of that," replied Morris flippanantly. "They were all out of it. Hold your cup, Way. Is it hot? I came back as fast as I could, but——"

"Don't you worry," sputtered Way. "It's hot enough to scald you. Good, too! M-mm!"

For several minutes conversation ceased and only the rumble and clank of the roller broke the silence. Then, when the last crumb was gone and the paper cups had been added to the flames, there were four contented grunts. "That's better," said Lanny.

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"I'm good for all night now. Let me have her, Gordon."

"Wait a bit. I'm having too good a time. What time is it?"

"About quarter to one," answered Way, studying the face of his watch in the moonlight.

"That's not so bad. How much more have we got, Lanny?"

"I'd say we'd done just about half," was the reply. "Better stop her and coal up a little."

"No stops this trip," answered Gordon. "Coal ahead. I'll get over here."

"What's the matter with letting me work her a bit?" asked Morris, when the door was shut again. "Seeing that I saved your lives——"

"Morris, old pal," replied Gordon, gravely, "this requires science and experience. I'd let you take her in a minute, but if anything happened to her I'd be held responsible. You can be fireman, though, and shovel coal."

"Next time you can get your own coffee," grumbled Morris. "I had just enough money, by the way, to pay the lunch wagon chap, but I had to charge the drinking cups to you, Gordon."

"That's more than I could do at Castle's," laughed Gordon. "Whoa! Gee, I didn't know that track was so close!"

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"Get out of there before you go through the fence," said Lanny, pushing him aside. "Do you suppose we'd ought to roll the track, too, fellows?"

A chorus of "No's" answered him. "Wouldn't do the least bit of good," added Way. "The track's in rotten shape anyhow. I don't see why we have to have the old thing. It's only in the way. If you have to go back for a long fly it's a safe bet you fall over the rim. What we ought to do is sod it over and——"

"Tell that to Guy Felker," advised Gordon. "Have you done any work with the team yet, Lanny?"

"I've had a couple of trials just to see what I could do. Guy is after me to give him three afternoons a week. I suppose I'll have to pretty soon."

"Oh, bother the Track Team," said Way. "It won't amount to anything and you'll lose baseball practice. Cut it out this year, Lanny."

"Not much! If it came to a show-down I'd rather run the hundred and two-twenty than play ball. And don't you be mistaken about the team being no good. We're going to have a mighty good team this year and we're going to simply run away from Springdale. You wait and see."

"What of it if we do?" grumbled Way. "Who cares?"

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"Most everyone except you, you old pudding-head," responded Gordon. "Want me to take her awhile now, Lanny?"

"No, thank you kindly. Guy's having a pretty hard time to get fellows interested in the track, and that's a fact, but he's going to win out all right. Don't go around talking like that, Way, because it isn't fair. Just because you don't care for track sports, you needn't discourage other fellows."

"Oh, I haven't said anything to discourage anyone. For that matter, if Guy wants to get a team together I wish him luck. But I don't think there's room for football and baseball and track, too. We ought to—to concentrate."

"Rot! Let's beat Springdale at every old thing we can. Them's my sentiments," announced Morris. "If we could do 'em up at tiddley-winks I'd be in favor of starting a team!"

"And I suppose you'd play left wink on it," laughed Way.

It was well after three o'clock before the Flying Juggernaut completed her last trip across the field and the moon was well down toward the west. Four very tired boys—and sleepy, too, now that the effects of the coffee were working off—rolled across to the gate, unbarred it, rolled through, closed it

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behind them, and set off again along Common Street. Somehow they cared less about discovery now and didn't even take the trouble to lower their voices as they rumbled past the darkened houses. Morris announced that they had made a mistake in the name of the steam roller; that its right name was "Reverberating Reginald." The others were too sleepy to argue about it, however.

Gordon, who had taken Lanny's place at the wheel, turned into the cross street and headed Reginald toward his berth. They didn't take the precaution to send scouters ahead now, and perhaps it wasn't worth while since the street lay plainly before them for several blocks. And perhaps what happened would have happened just the same. Lanny always insisted that it wouldn't, but never could prove his point. At all events, what did happen was this:

Just as they had trundled over the crossing at Main Street a voice reached them above the noise of the roller and a figure suddenly stepped into the road a few yards ahead. One very startled glance at the figure was sufficient. With a fine unanimity four forms detached themselves from the sheltering gloom of the steam roller and fled back along the road. Possibly the policeman was so surprised at the sudden result of his challenge that pursuit did

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not occur to him, or, possibly, the continued stately advance of the steam roller in his direction disconcerted him. At all events the boys became mere flying shapes in the distance before the officer took action. When he did he stepped nimbly out of the path of the roller and remarked stentoriously as it rumbled by:

“Hi, there! What’s this? Where you goin’ with that roller, hey?”

As there was no response he went after it, discovering to his surprise that the reason he had received no reply was that there was no one there to offer it! What occurred subsequently would have hugely diverted a spectator had there been one, which there wasn’t. On and on went the roller, moving further and further toward the sidewalk, and on and on trotted the policeman, making ineffectual efforts to board it. He had a very healthy respect for engines and wasn’t at all certain that this one might not resent his company. At last, however, desperation gave him courage and he stumbled onto the platform and began to pull, push or twist every movable thing he could lay hands on. The results were disconcerting. A cloud of white steam burst forth from somewhere with an alarming rush and hiss, a shrill, excruciating whistle shattered the night and a tiny stream of very hot

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water sprayed down his sleeve! But the roller kept right on rolling, majestically, remorselessly!

The policeman gave up in despair and rapped loudly with his club for assistance. At that moment the roller, heedless of his appeal, reached the intersection of Lafayette Street and, no longer restrained by the curbing against which it had been grinding, angled purposefully across and collided violently with a lamp-post. The lamp-post gave appreciably under the unexpected assault and the light flared wildly and expired. The steam roller, although its further progress was barred, kept on revolving its big wheels and the policeman, picking himself up, rescued his helmet from the coal-box and hurried from the scene.

CHAPTER XII

ON DICK'S PORCH

AFTER that," said Gordon, "I don't know just what did happen. I was too busy getting away from there to look back. I cut across an open field and got into the shadow of the fence on Louise Street and pretty soon Way came along. Where Lanny and Morris got to I don't know. Maybe they're still running!"

It was Sunday morning and Gordon and Dick were seated on the latter's porch. Dick, who had listened to his friend's narration with much amusement, laughed again.

"And you forgot to turn off the steam before you jumped, eh?"

"No, I didn't exactly forget to," replied Gordon judicially. "I thought of it, all right, but I couldn't locate the throttle thing. You see, it all happened so suddenly that there wasn't time to do much but run. That silly cop must have been standing in front of the little shed the contractors put up out

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there last year and we never suspected he was anywhere around until he jumped out on us about twenty feet ahead. He shouldn't have done that. He might have caused us heart-failure."

"Haven't you been over yet to see what happened to the roller?" Dick asked.

"I have not," was the emphatic reply. "Maybe this afternoon I'll sort of happen out there, but it might look suspicious if I went this morning. I suppose there'll be a dickens of a row about it. There wasn't anything in the paper, was there?" Gordon glanced at the *Sunday Reporter* on Dick's knees.

"No, but I suppose the paper was out before it happened. Do you think the policeman recognized any of you?"

"I don't know. He might. We didn't give him much chance, but, still, it was broad moonlight. Gee, I'd like to know what happened to that roller!"

"Call up the police station and ask," suggested Dick gravely.

"Yes, I will!" But Gordon's tone contradicted the statement. "Guess I'll call up Lanny and see if he got home. I had a fine time getting in. There wasn't a window unlatched and I had to squirm through the coal hole. I made a horrible noise

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when I dropped, too. I thought the coal would never get through sliding!"

"Did you get caught?"

Gordon shook his head doubtfully. "I guess mother knows, all right, but I don't think dad does. Anyway, he didn't say anything. It was fierce having to get up at eight o'clock! I felt like a— a——"

"You still look like it," laughed Dick. "Well, anyway, you got the job done, and that's something, even if you do go to jail for a while!"

"What do you suppose they'll do?" asked Gordon uneasily.

"Oh, I don't believe they'll be hard on you. Maybe a small fine and a month in jail."

"Quit your kidding! If I go to jail I'll see that you come, too."

"I've always understood that there was honor even amongst thieves," responded the other, "but I see that I was—hello, see who's here!"

It was Lanny who closed the gate behind him and walked up the short path with a weary grin on his face. "Good morning," he said, as he sank to the top step and leaned his head against the pillar. "Also good-night." He closed his eyes and snored loudly.

"What became of you?" asked Gordon.

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"What became of me?" Lanny opened his eyes protestingly. "When do you mean?"

"Last night, of course. Where did you run to?"

"Last night? Run? I don't understand you. I went to bed quite early last night and slept very nicely. Once I thought I heard a noise, a sort of jarring, rumbling noise, but I paid no attention to it. What a beautiful morning it is! 'O Beauteous Spring, thou art——'" His head settled back against the pillar again.

The others laughed, and Dick remarked soberly: "I suppose you've heard that they got Morris?"

Lanny opened his eyes once more and winked gravely. "I just had him on the phone a few minutes ago." He smiled wanly. "He couldn't get in the house when he got back and had to sleep out in the stable in a carriage."

"How about you?" asked Gordon.

Lanny waved a hand carelessly. "No trouble at all. Merely shinned up a water-spout and got in the linen closet window. Then I fell over a carpet-sweeper and went to bed. I shall insist on having a latch-key after this."

"But where the dickens did you and Morris run to?" insisted Gordon. "I never saw you once after I turned into the field."

"By that time I was shinning up the spout,"

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replied Lanny. "You see, I had a fine start on you, Gordie. I don't know just what my time was for the distance, but I'll bet it was mighty good. I'm pretty sure that I did the first two-twenty yards in something under twenty seconds! As for Morris, I never saw him. He says he fell over something and lay in the grass for about half an hour and then went home by way of the river. Something of a detour, that!"

"Well, tell me one thing, Lanny," said Dick. "Did the rolling do the field any good?"

Lanny became almost animated. "It certainly did! Want to go over and have a look at it?" Dick shook his head. "Well, it made a lot of difference. Of course, as I told the others, it ought to have been gone over two or three times to get it in real good shape, but it's at least a hundred per cent. better than it was before. I was afraid it might be too dry, but it wasn't. That old roller just squashed it right down in great style. I think we broke the board around the track in a few places, but it was pretty rotten anyway."

"That's good; I mean about the field. As I just said to Gordie, if you fellows have got to go to jail it's sort of a satisfaction that you accomplished something. I'll send you fruit and old magazines now and then, and a month will soon pass."

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"Is that really and truly so? Your kindness——"

"And I told *him*," interrupted Gordon, "that if we went to jail I'd see that he went along."

"Naturally." Lanny hugged his knees and smiled pleasantly at Dick. "We couldn't be happy without you, Dickums. Yes, you'll have to go along even if it's necessary for us to swear that you were the ring-leader. I'd be sorry for your folks, Dick, but——" Lanny shook his head inexorably. Then: "By the by, what about Way?"

"I left him at the corner of Common Street," replied Gordon. "I guess he managed all right."

"He ought to have; he's the manager," said Lanny, with a yawn. "My word, fellows, but I'm sleepy! And I had to pretend to be Little Bright-Eyes at breakfast, too. I know I'll fall asleep in church and snore!"

"Do you think that cop recognized us, Lanny?" Gordon asked.

"Don't ask me. If he did we'll know about it soon enough. Look here, whose idea was it, anyway? Who got us into this scrape?"

"Of course, you didn't," answered Gordon gravely, "and I'm certain I didn't. I guess it was Dick, wasn't it?"

Lanny seemed about to assent until Dick reached for a crutch. Then: "No, I don't think it was

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Dick," he replied. "You have only to look at his innocent countenance to know that he would never do such a thing. Guess it was Morris. He isn't here, and, besides, his dad's got enough influence and coin to buy him off. I'm certain it was Morris."

"So it was; I remember now. Another time we'll know better than to listen to his evil suggestions." And Gordon sighed deeply.

"He's older than we are, too, which makes it more—more deplorable."

"You have a wonderful command of the English language this morning," laughed Dick. "I'd love to listen to you some time when you're feeling fresh and quite wide-awake!"

"Thank you for those few kind words," responded Lanny gratefully. "I shan't attempt to conceal from you the fact that I am slightly drowsy to-day. Well, I've got to go back and report for church parade. You coming, Gordie?"

"I suppose so." Gordon got up with a sigh.

"Come around after dinner," suggested Dick, "and we'll get in Eli and take a ride. We might roll around to the scene of the late unpleasantness and see what finally happened to that roller!"

"All right," Lanny agreed, "only don't display too great an interest in the thing when you get there. Let us be—er—circumspect."

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"I don't like the sound of that word," murmured Gordon; "that is, the first and last syllables! Change it to 'cautious,' Lanny."

"Very well, let us be cautious. Farewell, Dick-ums!"

Their visit in the runabout to Brent's Addition that afternoon proved unsatisfactory. The steam roller, looking as innocent as you like, was back where they had found it and there was nothing to tell what had happened subsequent to their hurried departure. It was not until Monday morning that they had their curiosity satisfied, and then it was the *Reporter* that did it. The *Reporter* had chosen to treat the story with humor, heading it

ROAD ROLLER RUNS AMUCK!

It told how Officer Suggs, while patrolling his lonely beat on the outskirts of our fair city, had had his attention attracted by mysterious sounds on Aspen Avenue. The intrepid guardian of the law had thereupon concealed himself in ambush just in time to behold, coming toward him, one of the Street Department's steam rollers. Ordered to stop and give an account of itself, the roller had promptly attacked the officer. The latter, with rare presence of mind, leaped to a

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place of safety and the roller, emitting a roar of rage and disappointment, tried to escape. Then followed a vivid account of the pursuit, the disorderly conduct of the roller, the wanton attack on the lamp-post and the final subjugation and arrest of the marauder, an arrest not consummated until several members of the police force and employees of the Street Department had been hurried to the scene. It made a good story and at least five of the *Reporter's* readers enjoyed it vastly. To their relief the paper ended with the encouraging statement that "so far the police are unable to offer any satisfactory explanation of the affair. Superintendent Burns, of the Street Department, hints that some person or persons unknown had a hand in the matter, but to the *Reporter* it looks like a remarkable case of inanimate depravity."

And that ended the matter, save that eventually the true story leaked out, as such things will, and became generally known throughout the school. Whether it ever reached the ears of Superintendent Burns is not known. If it did he took no action.

Brent Field profited in any case. That Monday afternoon the improvement in the condition of the ground was so noticeable that many fellows remarked on it. Fortunately, though, they were quite satisfied with the casual explanation that it had been

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"fixed up a bit," and for some reason the marks left by the passage of the roller, plainly visible, failed to connect themselves with the story in that morning's paper. Perhaps the principal reason for this was that very few of the fellows read anything in the *Reporter* outside of the sporting page. The infield, and especially the base paths, was more level and smoother than it had ever been, and during practice that afternoon there were far fewer errors that could be laid to inequalities of the surface. To be sure, when Harry Bryan let a ball bound through his hands he promptly picked up a pebble and disgustedly tossed it away, but the excuse didn't carry the usual conviction.

Practice went well that afternoon. Fielding was cleaner and it really looked to Dick as though his charges were at last finding their batting eyes. Bryan, Cotner and Merrick all hit the ball hard in the four-inning contest with the practice team, the former getting two two-baggers in two turns at bat and Cotner connecting with one of Tom Nostrand's offerings for a three-base hit. The First Team had no trouble in winning the decision, the score being 5 to 1. Meanwhile, on the cinders the Track Team candidates were busy, and over on the Main Street side of the field, where the pits were located, the jumpers and weight-throwers were trying them-

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selves out as extensively as the ever-watchful "Skeet" would allow. Fudge Shaw, looking heroic—and slightly rotund—in a brand-new white shirt, trunks and spiked shoes, was taking his turn with the shot. So far only three other youths had chosen to contest with him for the mastery in this event, but unfortunately for Fudge two of the three were older fellows with experience and brawn. One, Harry Partridge, a senior and a tackle on the football team, was in command of the shot-putters. Partridge was a good sort usually, Fudge considered, but to-day he was certainly impatient and censorious, not to mention sarcastic!

"Look here, Fudge," he asked after the tyro had let the shot roll off the side of his hand and dribble away for a scant twelve feet in a direction perilously close to a passing broad-jumper, "who ever told you you could put the shot, anyway? You don't know the first thing about it! Now come back here and let me tell you for the fiftieth time that the shot leaves your hand over the tips of your fingers and doesn't roll off the side. I'm not saying anything just now about your spring or your shoulder work. All I'm trying to do is to get it into that ivory knob of yours that the shot rests *here* and that it leaves your hand *so!* Now cut out all the movements and let me see you hold it right and get it away right.

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Thank you, that's very rotten! Go ahead, Thad. Try not to foul this time. You start too far forward. That's better! Did you see—look here, Shaw, if you're out here to put the shot you watch what's going on and never mind the jumpers! If you don't watch how these other fellows do it you never will learn! All right, Falkland!"

"Maybe," said Fudge when he and Perry were walking home, "maybe I'd rather be a broad-jumper, anyway. This shot-putting's a silly stunt!"

CHAPTER XIII

FOILED!

WHETHER Fudge really believed all he professed to regarding the mysterious occupant of Room 12 in the brick building on G Street is a question. Fudge, being an author of highly sensational romances, doubtless possessed a little more imagination than common and liked to give it free rein. Probably it is safe to say that he believed about half. Perry, less imaginative and far more practical, had been at first taken in by Fudge and had really credited most if not quite all that Fudge had asserted. When, however, another week passed and nothing startling happened, he began to lose faith. Almost every morning the supposed desperado ate his breakfast in full view of Perry very much as anyone else would have eaten it, rationally clothed and exhibiting absolutely none of the tricks or manners popularly associated with criminals. He did not, for instance, suddenly pause to glance furtively from

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the window. Nor did he ever, when Perry was looking, shrug his shoulders as villains always did on the screen at the theater. In short, as a criminal he was decidedly disappointing!

One morning he actually laughed. Perry couldn't hear the laugh, but he could see it, and there was nothing sardonic about it. It was just a jolly, chuckling sort of laugh, apparently inspired by something in the morning paper. Perry's own features creased in sympathy. After that Perry found it very difficult to place credence in the "safe-breaker" theory. Then, too, Fudge failed to develop any new evidence. In fact, to all appearances, Fudge had gone to sleep on his job. When Perry mentioned the matter to him Fudge would frown portentously and intimate that affairs had reached a point where mental rather than physical exertion counted most. Perry, though, was no longer deceived.

"Huh," he said one day, "there was nothing in that yarn of yours and you've found it out. What's the good of pretending any more?"

Fudge looked sarcastic and mysterious but refused to bandy words. His "If-you-knew-all-I-know" air slightly impressed the other, and Perry begged to be taken into the secret. But Fudge showed that he felt wounded by his friend's defec-

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tion and took himself off in dignified silence. When he had reached home and had settled himself on the platform in the apple tree, however, Fudge realized that his reputation and standing as an authority on crime and its detection was in danger. Something, consequently, must be done to restore Perry's confidence. But what? He thought hard and long, so long that twilight grew to darkness before he left his retreat and hurried to the house for supper. He had, though, solved his problem.

The next day, which was Saturday, he presented himself at Perry's at a little after nine o'clock. Perry, who had been practicing starts on the weed-grown path at the side of the house, joined him on the front porch somewhat out of breath and with his thoughts far from the subject of crime and criminals, clues and detectives. One glance at Fudge's countenance, however, told him that matters of importance were about to be divulged. He pocketed his grips and prepared to listen and be impressed. Briefly, what Fudge had to say was this:

He had, he found, been slightly mistaken regarding Mr. Myron Addicks. The mistake was a natural one. It consisted of classifying Mr. Addicks as a safe-breaker instead of a train-robber. Fudge did not explain clearly by what marvelous mental processes he had arrived at a knowledge of his error,

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or perhaps the fault was with Perry's understanding. At all events, the result was there and already his new theory had been proven correct. He had that very morning, not more than twenty minutes ago, read, in the local office of the American Express Company, a description of one "Edward Hurley, alias John Crowell, alias John Fenney," wanted by the company for the robbery of an express car at Cartwright, Utah, on February seventeenth last, which exactly tallied with the appearance of Mr. Myron Addicks, allowing, of course, for certain efforts at disguise. Fudge had copied the salient points of the placard in the express office and referred now to his memorandum, written on the back of a money order blank: "Age, about 28. Height, 5 feet, 10 inches. Weight, about 170 pounds. Dark brown hair, blue eyes, complexion dark. Was clean-shaven when last seen, but has probably grown beard or mustache. Carries himself erect. Has white scar about two inches in length on back of left forearm."

"There was a picture of him, too," said Fudge, "but I guess it wasn't a very good one, because he had his head thrown back and his eyes half closed and was scowling like anything. It must have been taken by the police."

"What is the reward?" asked Perry breathlessly.

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"Five hundred dollars, it said. Maybe they'd pay more, though."

"That would be two hundred and fifty apiece," reflected the other. "That wouldn't be so bad, would it? But—but it doesn't seem to me that the description is much like this fellow. Did the picture look like him?"

"Well," replied Fudge judicially, "it did and then again it didn't. You see, the fellow's face was all screwed up, and he didn't have any mustache. A mustache makes a lot of difference in your looks, you know. But the description fits him to a T. 'Dark brown hair, blue eyes——'"

"I don't think this chap's eyes are blue, though."

"I'll bet you anything they are! What color are they then?"

"I don't know," confessed Perry.

"No, and there you are! He's about five feet, ten inches high, isn't he?" Perry nodded doubtfully. "And he weighs about a hundred and seventy pounds, doesn't he? And his complexion's dark and he carries himself erect! And he has a false mustache, and the notice said he would probably have one. Oh, it's our man all right! Don't you worry! Besides, don't you see this explains his wearing that cowboy get-up you saw him in? That's

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probably what he was. Lots of train-robbers were cowboys first-off."

"Maybe," said Perry thoughtfully. "But—but supposing we proved it on him."

"Well?"

"Would you want to—to give him away?"

Fudge hesitated. "I wouldn't *want* to," he said at last, "but it's the duty of a good citizen to aid in the apprehension of lawbreakers, isn't it? And, besides, someone would get that five hundred sooner or later, wouldn't they? Bound to! You bet! Well, there you are!"

But Perry looked unconvinced. "I don't think I'd like to," he murmured presently. "Anyhow, maybe we're mistaken. Maybe his eyes aren't blue. If we could get a look at his arm——"

"That's just what we've got to do," replied Fudge. "That's what will tell."

"But how?"

"I haven't decided that yet. There are ways. You leave it to me. I guess he's just hiding out here, Perry. I mean I don't believe he is thinking of doing another job just yet. He's probably waiting for this to blow over. I told you he was a slick one!"

"But if he really was wanted for robbing that train," objected Perry, "it doesn't seem to me he'd

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show himself around the way he's doing. He'd hide, wouldn't he, Fudge?"

"Where? He is hiding. He wears that mustache and he's trusting to that, you see. Why, if he went sneaking around the police would notice him at once, Perry. So he comes right out in public; makes believe he's a civil engineer and plays the piano in a theater. You don't suppose, do you, that the police would ever think of looking in a moving picture house for an escaped train-robber? Say, he must sort of laugh to himself when he sees those train-robbery films, eh?"

"But if he wears that mustache when he goes out, Fudge, why does he take it off when he's in his room?"

"Maybe it isn't comfortable. I should think it mightn't be."

"Yes, but he must know that most anyone can see him when he sits at his window like that in the morning."

Fudge was silent for a moment. Then: "Perhaps he doesn't think of that," he suggested weakly. "Anyhow, what we've got to do is see first if his eyes are blue, and after that whether he has a scar on his arm. We might wait in front of the theater this afternoon, only there's the ball game and we don't want to miss that."

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"That isn't until three, and the theater begins at two."

"That's so! We'll do it, then! I'll be around right after dinner, and we'll watch for him. Say, what would you do with two hundred and fifty dollars, Perry?"

Perry shook his head. "I don't know. Guess I'd give it to dad, all but twenty-five dollars, maybe. What would you?"

Fudge shook his head also. "Search me! Well, we haven't got it yet. I guess I could find things to do with it all right. Say, you don't suppose he's at his window now, do you?"

They ascended to Perry's room and looked across, but the opposite casement was vacant. Nor, although they kept watch for a good ten minutes, did they catch sight of the suspect. They returned to the porch. "What we might do," said Fudge reflectively, "is go and see him and make believe we wanted some civil engineering done."

"We'd look fine doing that!" scoffed Perry. "He'd know right away we were faking."

"I guess so," Fudge acknowledged. "We might get someone else to do it, though."

"Who?"

"Well, you might ask your father."

"I might, but I'm not likely to," was the derisive

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response. "Besides, all we've got to do is to get a good look at him to see whether his eyes are blue or not."

"You don't suppose folks can change the color of their eyes, do you?"

"Of course not! How could they?"

Fudge shook his head. "Criminals know lots of tricks we don't," he replied. "But we'll soon see."

Whereupon Perry went back to practicing starts in the side yard and Fudge, finding a rock, gave an interesting imitation of putting the shot.

They reached the theater at twenty-five minutes before two. Fudge apologized for being a trifle late, explaining that his mother had sent him on an errand directly after dinner in spite of his plea of an important engagement. Still, there was no doubt but that they were in plenty of time, for the orchestra did not assemble until a few minutes before two. As there was already quite a throng awaiting the opening of the doors, they decided to separate and take opposite sides of the entrance. This they did, Fudge assuming an expression and demeanor so purposeless that Perry feared he would be arrested as an escaped lunatic by the policeman on duty there. Several hundreds of persons passed into the theater, but neither of the boys caught sight of their quarry, and when, at two o'clock, the strains

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of the orchestra reached them, they had to confess themselves defeated. By that time the crowd had thinned out to a mere dribble of late arrivals and the officer was, or seemed to them to be, eyeing them with growing suspicion. They were glad when they had escaped from his chilly stare.

"I don't see——" began Perry.

"I do!" Fudge interrupted bitterly. "We're a couple of chumps! Why, the orchestra chaps go in the stage entrance, of course! And that's around in the alley off Pine Street! Gee, we're a fine pair of dummies, aren't we?"

There was no denying it and so Perry mutely consented with a sorrowful nod.

"Well, we'll know better next time," said Fudge more cheerfully. "Come on into Castle's and have a soda. Only it'll have to be a five-center, because I'm pretty nearly strapped. Sleuthing makes a fellow thirsty."

Ten minutes later the amateur detectives, forgetting their defeat and cheered by two glasses of cherry phosphate, started for the field.

CHAPTER XIV

THE GAME WITH NORRISVILLE

THIS afternoon's contest was the first one of the season with an outside team. Norrisville Academy, since it was a boarding school, had the advantage of being able to get into condition rather earlier in the year than Clearfield High School. To-day's opponents had, in fact, been practicing regularly since the latter part of February, since they were so fortunate as to possess a fine gymnasium with a big and practical baseball cage. Aside from this advantage, however, Norrisville had nothing Clearfield hadn't, and if the latter had enjoyed another fortnight of practice Dick Lovering would have had no doubt as to the outcome of the game. But as things were he told himself that he would be quite satisfied if his charges came through with something approaching a close score.

It was a splendid April day, warm and still. There were a good many clouds about, though, and

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the morning paper had predicted showers. With this in mind, Dick resolved to get a good start in the first few innings, if that were possible, and so presented a line-up that surprised the large audience of High School rooters that had turned out for the game. As set down in Manager Wayland's score-book, the order of batting was as follows: Bryan, 2b; Farrar, cf; Merrick, 1b; Jones, ss; Scott, 3b; McCoy, 1f; Breen, rf; White, c; Nostrand, p. This arrangement in Dick's present judgment presented the team's best batting strength. Tom Nostrand was put in the box instead of Tom Haley, since so far this spring he had out-hit the first-choice pitcher almost two to one. It takes runs to win a game and runs were what Dick was after.

Fudge, occupying one and a third seats behind the home plate, flanked by Perry on one side and Arthur Beaton, the Track Team Manager, on the other, viewed the selection of talent dubiously. More than that, he didn't hesitate to criticize. Fudge never did. He was a good, willing critic. No one, though, took him seriously, unless, perhaps, it was the devoted Perry, who, knowing little of baseball, was ready to concede much knowledge of the subject to his chum. Arthur Beaton, however, frankly disagreed with Fudge's statements.

"Forget it, Fudge," he said. "Dick Lovering

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knew baseball when you were waving a rattle. Talk about things you understand."

"Of course he knows baseball. I'm not saying he doesn't, am I? What I'm telling you is that Joe Browne's a heap better fielder than Howard Breen."

"Maybe, but he isn't worth two cents as a hitter."

"That's all right. If a fellow fields well enough he doesn't have to be any Ty Cobb to make good. It's all right to go after runs, but if you let the other fellow get runs, too, what good are you doing? If they whack a ball into right field it'll be good for three bases, I tell you. Breen's as slow as cold molasses and can't throw half-way to the plate!"

"You'd better slip down there before it's too late and tell that to Dick," said Arthur sarcastically. "He'd be mighty glad to know it."

"That's all right, old scout. You wait and see if I'm not right. I just hope the first fellow up lams one into right!"

He didn't though; he popped a foul to Lanny and retired to the bench. The succeeding "Norris-villains," as Fudge called them, were quickly disposed of at first, and Harry Bryan went to bat for the home team. Bryan was a heady batsman and had a reputation for getting his base. He wasn't particular how he did it. He was a good waiter,

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had a positive genius for getting struck with the ball and could, when required, lay down a well-calculated bunt. Once on the base, he was hard to stop. On this occasion, he followed Dick's instructions and was walked after six pitched balls. Pete Farrar waited until Clayton, the Norrisville pitcher, had sent a ball and a strike over and then trundled one down the first base path that started well but unfortunately rolled out, to the immense relief of the hovering Norrisville pitcher and first-baseman. With two strikes against him, it was up to Pete to hit out of the infield, but Captain Jones, coaching at first, sent Bryan off to second and Pete's swipe at the ball missed. Bryan, though, was safe by three feet, and the stands applauded wildly and saw in imagination the beginning of Clearfield's scoring. But Bryan never got beyond second in that inning. Gordon Merrick flied out to shortstop and Captain Warner Jones, trying his best to hit between second and short, lined one squarely into second-baseman's glove.

Nostrand held the enemy safe once more, although the second man up got to first on Scott's error and slid safely to second when the third batsman was thrown out, Scott to Merrick. A fly to McCoy in left field ended the suspense.

It was Will Scott who started things going for

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the Purple. He was first up and caught the second offering on the end of his bat and landed it in short right for a single. McCoy sacrificed nicely and Scott took second. Breen there and then vindicated Dick's judgment. After Clayton had put himself in a hole by trying to give Breen what he didn't want, and after the onlookers had gone through a violent attack of heart-failure when Will Scott was very nearly caught off second, Breen found something he liked the look of and crashed his bat against it with the result that Scott sped home and Breen rested on second.

Dick summoned Lanny and whispered to him and Lanny nodded and strode to the plate swinging the black bat that was his especial pride and affection. Norrisville played in and Lanny did what they expected he would try to do, but did it so well that their defense was unequal to the task. His bunt toward third was slow and short. Breen landed on the next bag and Lanny streaked for first. Both third-baseman and catcher went after the bunt and there was an instant of indecision. Then third-baseman scooped up the ball and pegged to first. But Lanny, whose record for sixty yards was six and four-fifths seconds, beat out the throw.

Nostrand played a waiting game and had two strikes and a ball on him before Lanny found his

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chance to steal. Then, with a good getaway, he slid to second unchallenged, Nostrand swinging and missing. With men on third and second and but one down, the world looked bright to the Clearfield supporters, but when, a moment later, Nostrand's attempt at a sacrifice fly popped high and fell into shortstop's hands, the outlook dimmed.

But there was still hope of more runs. With Bryan up, Clearfield might get a hit. The Norrisville catcher, though, decided that Bryan would be better on first than at bat and signaled for a pass. Four wide ones were pitched and Harry trotted to first and the bases were filled. Theoretically, the Norrisville catcher was right, for with two out three on bases were no more dangerous than two, and he knew that the next batsman, Pete Farrar, had earned his location in the line-up because of his ability to sacrifice rather than to hit out. But for once theory and practice didn't agree. Farrar, barred from bunting, resolved to go to the other extreme and hit as hard and as far as he could—if he hit at all. For a minute or two it looked as though he was not to hit at all, for Clayton kept the ball around Farrar's knees and registered two strikes against him before Pete realized the fact. Then came a ball and then a good one that Pete fouled behind first base. Another ball, and the tally

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was two and two. Again Pete connected and sent the ball crashing into the stand. Clayton's attempt to cut the corner resulted badly for him, for the umpire judged it a ball. Anxious coaches danced and shouted jubilantly.

"He's got to pitch now, Pete!" bawled Captain Jones. "It's got to be good! Here we go! On your toes, Breen! Touch all the bases, Harry! Yip! Yip! Yip! Yi——"

The last "Yip" was never finished, for just when Warner was in the middle of it bat and ball met with a *crack* and a number of things happened simultaneously. The ball went streaking across the in-field, rising as it went, Breen scuttled to the plate, Lanny flew to third, Harry Bryan sped to second, Pete legged it desperately to first. Second-baseman made a wild attempt to reach the ball, but it passed well above his upstretched glove and kept on. Right- and center-fielders started in, hesitated, changed their minds and raced back. The spectators, on their feet to a boy—or girl—yelled madly as fielders and ball came nearer and nearer together far out beyond the running track in deep center. A brief moment of suspense during which the shouting died down to little more than a murmur and then the outcome was apparent and the yelling suddenly arose to new heights. The fielders slowed down in the

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shadow of the distant fence, but not so the ball. It made a fine, heroic effort to pass out of the field but couldn't quite do it. Instead it banged against the boards a few inches from the top and bounded back. It was right-fielder who recovered it and who, turning quickly, made a fine throw to second-baseman. And second-baseman did all he could to cut that hit down to a three-bagger, but Pete was already scuttling to the plate when the ball left his hand and the throw, being hurried, took the catcher just far enough to the right to let Pete in. Pete, catcher and ball became interestingly mixed together for an instant in a cloud of dust and then the umpire, stooping and spreading his arms with palms downward, returned his verdict.

"He's safe!" declared the official.

The breathless Pete was extricated and pulled triumphantly to the bench while Norrisville, represented by catcher and pitcher and shortstop, who was also captain, gathered around the home plate to record their displeasure at the decision. But Mr. Cochran, physical director at the Y. M. C. A., discouraged argument and waved them aside politely but firmly and, while the cheering died away, Gordon Merrick went to bat. Clayton was shaken by that home-run and seemed absolutely unable to tell where the plate was, although the catcher despair-

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ingly invited him to come up and have a look at it! Gordon smiled serenely and presently walked to first. Captain Jones sent him to second with a nice hit past shortstop and Clearfield got ready to acclaim more tallies. But Scott's best was a slow grounder to shortstop and he made the third out.

Five runs, however, was enough to win the game, or so, at least, the delighted Clearfield supporters declared. And so, too, thought the players themselves. As for their coach, Dick hoped the game was safe, but he meant to take no chances and so when in the next inning, after his own players had failed to add to the total, Norrisville began to show a liking for Tom Nostrand's delivery by getting two safeties and putting a man on third before the side was retired, Dick sent Tom Haley to warm up.

There was no more scoring by either team until the first of the sixth. Then Haley had a bad inning. The first Norrisville batter laid down a bunt toward the pitcher's box and Tom, fielding it hurriedly, pegged it far over Merrick's head. The runner slid to second in safety. That mishap unsettled Haley and he filled the bases by passing the next two men. That Clearfield finally got out of the hole with only two runs against her might well be considered a piece of good fortune. In the last of the

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sixth Clearfield added one more tally and the score stood 6 to 2. Neither side scored in the seventh.

For my part, I'd like to lower the curtain. Clearfield should have had that game. But it wasn't to be. Perhaps the home players were too certain. At all events, errors began to crop out at the most unfortunate times, and these, coupled with Tom Haley's erratic pitching, were the Purple's undoing. It was Captain Jones himself who booted an easy hit that might have been a double and instead of retiring the side in the first of the eighth, let two more runs cross the plate. Then Haley hit a batsman, donated a third base on balls and finally allowed a hard-slugging Norrisville man to slap out a two-bagger. When the worst was over the score was tied, and so it remained throughout the ninth inning and the tenth and the eleventh and the twelfth. And when that was over darkness had descended and eighteen very tired players heard with relief the umpire call the game. And several hundred spectators, rather stiff and chilly and hungry, went disappointedly home to supper.

"I knew mighty well," declared Fudge as he and Perry made their way through the twilight, "that we could never win with *that* line-up! You heard me tell Harry so, too, didn't you?"

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And Perry, being a good chum, assented.

The next day it rained. Not enough, as Fudge bitterly reflected, to keep a fellow from going to church, but sufficiently to make sojourning out of doors in the afternoon a very wet and unpleasant business. It drizzled, but the drizzle was much more of a rain than a mist, and when, about three o'clock, Fudge went across town to Perry's house he arrived in a fairly damp condition. Being damp affected Fudge's naturally sunny disposition. It didn't make him cross, but it gave him an injured and slightly pathetic expression and tinged his utterances with gloom and pessimism. He wasn't a very cheerful companion to-day, and Perry, who had been having a rather comfortable and cozy time curled up on the black horse-hair lounge in the Doctor's reception-room—also used as a parlor on extraordinary occasions—with a volume of Du Chaillu's travels which he had happened on in the book-case, almost wished that his friend had stayed at home. They went up to Perry's room and sat by the open window and watched the drizzle and talked desultorily of track and field work and yesterday's game and of many other things. The affair of the "train-robber" was, it seemed by mutual agreement, avoided; it was not a day to inspire one to detecting. The "train-robber's" window was

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open across the back yard, but no one appeared at it. Fudge had drawn the conversation back to shot-putting and was indulging in a few well-chosen disparaging remarks with regard to the overbearing manner of Harry Partridge when sounds came to them. Of course sounds had been coming to them for half an hour; the patter of rain, the quiet foot-falls of Mrs. Hull below-stairs, the whistle of the three-twenty-two train crossing the bridge and such ordinary noises; but this was new and different. Perry drew Fudge's attention to it and then listened puzzledly. At first it seemed to come from around the corner of the house, but presently they located it in the room occupied by the "train-robber." They crowded their heads through the window and strained their ears.

"What's he doing?" demanded Fudge in a hoarse whisper after a minute or two.

"I think"—Perry hesitated—"I think he's singing!"

"Singing!"

"Yes; listen!" They listened. Perry was right. The sounds that issued from the window were undoubtedly those of a man's voice raised in song. What the words of the song were they couldn't make out, but the tune, if it deserved the name, was peculiarly slow and doleful.

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"Jimminy, he must be feeling bad!" muttered Fudge.

"Sounds like a—a dirge, doesn't it?"

"Awful!" They tried hard to hear what it was all about, but as the singer was evidently well back from the window and as the window was some little distance away, they failed. Finally they drew their heads in, being by that time somewhat wet, and viewed each other inquiringly. Then, without a word, Fudge lifted his cap from the table, Perry, equally silent, moved toward the door and the two quietly descended the staircase. Perry got his cap from the tree in the front hall and they slipped through the front door, across the porch and into the drizzle.

Two minutes later they were climbing the stairs in the brick building on G Street, looking very much like the desperate conspirators they felt themselves to be. A pleasant odor from the bakery on the first floor pursued them as they noiselessly ascended the staircase and crept along the first hall. The building was silent and apparently deserted until, half-way up the second flight, from behind the closed door and transom of Number 7, came the muffled tones of a deep bass voice in monotonous, wailing cadence. The boys paused at the head of the stairs and listened. Words came to them, but

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only occasionally. They tip-toed nearer. That was better. They could hear fairly well now.

“I wash in a pool and wipe on a sack,
And carry my wardrobe right on my back.
For want of a stove I cook bread in a pot,
And sleep on the ground for want of a cot.”

As the voices of the Sirens lured Ulysses of old,
so the doleful strains lured Perry and Fudge nearer
and nearer.

“My ceiling’s the sky and my carpet’s the grass,
My music’s the lowing of herds as they pass.
My books are the streams and my Bible’s a stone,
My preacher’s a wolf on a pulpit of bones.”

By now the two boys were standing on either side
of the door, listening raptly.

“The preacher he says from his pulpit of bones
That the Lord favors those who look out for their own.
My friends often hint——”

The wails ceased. A moment’s silence ensued.
Then the door was suddenly opened, and :

“Come right in, pardners,” said a voice. “Every-
thing’s free!”

CHAPTER XV

THE WHITE SCAR

THEY were two very startled youths who leaped back as the door unexpectedly opened and who, for a breathless instant, gazed speechlessly at the man confronting them. He was tall, wide-shouldered and narrow-hipped, with a frank, good-looking face, clean-shaven, on which at the moment a quizzical smile rested. He had laid aside coat and vest, and under the uprolled sleeves of his white shirt his long arms showed muscles like whip-cords. It was Fudge who found his voice first.

"I—I—W-w-we——"

"No savvy, hombre. Start again."

"W-we were j-j-just list-list-list——"

"Listening," said Perry helpfully.

"Well, I hope you liked it. Come on in. We're all friends together."

"No, thanks," said Perry, embarrassed. "We just happened to hear you singing——"

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"Hooray!" exclaimed the man. "That's sure fine! Shake, pardner!"

And Perry found himself shaking hands most enthusiastically with the strange person and, at the same time, being drawn through the doorway. He tried to hold back, but it was utterly useless. Fudge, his startled expression vastly increased, followed doubtfully and the man closed the door. He was smiling broadly.

"Sit down, boys, and tell me your sweet, sad tale. You sure have made a big hit with me, all right. No one ever called that noise of mine singing before. Yes, sir, muchachos, you've won me!"

"I—we thought it was very"—Perry searched for a word—"very nice singing."

"P-P-Peachy," supplemented Fudge, smiling ingratiatingly, and then casting a troubled look at the closed door. To be shut in like this at the mercy of a train-robber had not been within his calculations. To increase his uneasiness, Fudge noted that his host's eyes were blue, light grayish-blue, but still to all intents and purposes blue! He looked meaningly at Perry, wondering whether, if they started together, they could reach the door before they were intercepted. The man had made them take two of the three chairs and perched him-

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self on a corner of the table in the middle of the room.

"I hope I didn't scare you when I pulled the door open," he said. "Wouldn't want to do that, you know. Too flattered at having an audience."

"No, sir, we weren't scared," Perry assured him not too truthfully. "We oughtn't have done it, but—we heard you and——"

"Just couldn't resist it, eh? Was it the words or the tune that hypnotized you?" He regarded Perry very gravely indeed, but there was a twinkle in his blue eyes.

Perry smiled weakly.

"I—I guess it was the words," he said.

"I'll bet it was! That's a nice song. I'll teach it to you some time if you like. Haven't I seen you boys around town?"

Perry nodded, casting a quick glance at Fudge. Fudge, however, had his gaze set longingly on the door.

"I thought so. I've got a good memory for faces. Pretty good ears, too." He laughed. "I suppose you fellows thought you weren't making a sound out there? Well, I heard you when you first came along the hall. Live around here, do you?"

"I do," answered Perry. "He doesn't."

"Well, let's tell our names. Mine's Addicks."

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"My name is Hull and his is Shaw. My first name is Perry."

"Perry Hull, eh? Sounds like something out of a history of the American Navy. Any relation to the celebrated commodores?"

"No, sir, I don't think so."

"What's his name to his friends?" asked the host, nodding toward Fudge.

"Fud—that is, William."

"My first name's Myron. I don't know why they called me that, but they did. Doesn't he ever talk?" Again Mr. Addicks indicated the absorbed Fudge.

"I was j-j-just thinking," replied the latter.

"Oh! What were you thinking?"

Fudge regarded the questioner doubtfully. "Lots of things," he muttered darkly.

Mr. Addicks laughed. "Sounds interesting, the way you tell it! I dare say you chaps go to school?"

"Yes, sir, High School," replied Perry. "We're both juniors."

"Good leather! Go in for sports, do you? Football, baseball, those things?"

"A little. Fudge plays baseball and football some. I play football, too."

"So his name is Fudge, is it? William Fudge Shaw, I suppose."

"It's just a nickname," explained Perry.

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"I savvy. William week-days and Fudge Sunday, eh?" Perry smiled politely at the joke, but Fudge's expression remained serious and distrustful. "I'd like to see you fellows play some time," continued their host. "I used to play football at college, but I never tried baseball. Didn't have time. Sprinting and hurdling were my stunts. Do you have a track team at your school?"

"Yes, sir," answered Perry eagerly, "and he and I are trying for it this year. Fudge is learning to put the shot and throw the hammer and I'm trying the sprints."

"You don't say? How old are you, Hull?"

"Fifteen."

"You look older. What's your time for the hundred?"

"I—I don't know yet. Skeet—he's our coach—gave me a trial the other day, but he wouldn't tell me what my time was."

Mr. Addicks nodded. "I see. What's the school record?"

Perry didn't know, but Fudge supplied the information. "It's ten and a fifth. Lanny White did it last year against Springdale."

"That's good work! I'd like to see that chap run. I suppose you have your work-outs in the afternoons, don't you? If I didn't have to—if I

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wasn't so busy I'd come out and look you over. My record was ten flat for the hundred when I was in college, and fifteen and two-fifths over the high hurdles. I never could do much at the two-twenty distance, sprint or hurdles. I did do the low hurdles once in twenty-six flat, but that was in practice."

"What college did you go to?" asked Fudge, forgetting his suspicion for the moment.

"Morgan," answered the man, and smiled at their perplexity. "It's in Nebraska. Ever hear of it?"

They shook their heads, looking apologetic.

"I suppose not. It's a long ride from here. Good little college, though. I spent a right comfortable three years there."

"Does it take but three years to get through there?" asked Fudge. "I'd like to go there myself, I guess."

"No, but I was in a hurry, so I finished up in three. Had to get out and hustle me a living, you see. Not but what I wasn't doing that after a fashion all the time." He paused and chuckled deeply. "Ran a livery stable."

"A livery stable! While you were in college?" asked Fudge.

"You said it, hombre. Had to do something. Didn't have much of anything but what I had on

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when I struck college. Paid them a half-year's tuition—education's cheap out that way, friends, and it's good, too—and looked around for something to work at. Didn't find anything at first and so one day I go down to a stable run by a poor thing name of Cheeny and hires me a bronch for a couple of hours. I can always think a heap better when I'm on a horse, it seems. Well, thinking doesn't do me much good this time, though, and I heads back to town telling myself the best thing I can do is roll my blanket and hit the trail. But when I gets back to the stable, which isn't much more than a shed and a corral built of railway ties set on end, this poor thing name of Cheeny says to me: 'Know anyone wants to buy a nice livery business?' 'Supposing I did?' says I, squinting around the shack. 'Why, here it is,' he says. Well, to come right down to brass tacks, he and I did business after a day or two. He wanted to hike back to Missouri, which he ought never to have left, and we made a dicker. I was to pay him so much a month till we were square. Course I knew that, as he'd been running the place, he wasn't making enough to pay his feed bill, but I had a notion I could do a bit better. Did, too. What I bought wasn't much—half a dozen carriages about ready to fall to pieces, five bronchos and a little grain and

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alfalfa. The bronchs weren't so bad, if you excuse their looks. What they needed mostly was food. Trouble was, though, ^{or} that everyone out there who needed a horse had one, and I saw that if I was to make anything on that investment I'd have to make my own market. Which I did."

"How did you do it?" asked Perry eagerly.

"Introduced the wholesome recreation of riding. Used to take a string of bronchs up to college in the afternoon and stand 'em outside the Hall. Then when anyone came along I'd ask him if he didn't want to hire a horse for two bits an hour. At first I just got laughed at. Then one or two fellows tried it for a lark, and after that it went fine. I gave riding lessons to some of the girls—Morgan is co-ed, you know—and the next year I had to buy me more horses. Paid that poor thing name of Cheeny in full before I'd been there six months. When I left I sold out to a man from Lincoln and did right well. Now you talk."

"Wh-what did you do next?" asked Fudge interestedly.

"Went down to Texas and got a job with a firm of engineers who were running a new railway down to the Gulf. I'd taken a course of civil engineering. Met up with a slick customer who looked like a down-east preacher and went shares with him

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on some oil land. Still got it. Something happened to the railway about that time and they stopped work. That left me strapped and I hired out as a ranch hand. After that I went to punching down near Las Topas."

"Punching?" queried Fudge.

"Cows."

"You mean you were a cowboy?" asked Perry eagerly.

"Four years of it."

"Gee!" sighed Perry. "That must have been great!"

Mr. Addicks laughed. "Well, some of it wasn't so bad. I liked it pretty well. I was always crazy about horses and riding. I got enough of it, though. It don't get you anything. An uncle of mine died and a lawyer wrote me I was the old chap's heir and had better beat it back here and claim the estate. Which I did." He smiled wryly. "The estate was a tumble-down farm-house about three miles from here on the Springdale road with a mortgage all over it. There's so much mortgage you have to lift up a corner of it before you can see the house. Being still a trifle worse than broke, I got a job with a moving picture company in Jersey and rode for 'em almost a year. That was harder work than being the real thing, and a sight more dangerous. I

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nearly killed myself one day, when a horse fell on me, and so I got my time and quit being an actor. That was about a month ago. Then I came back here and rented this place and started in business. The business hasn't shown up yet, though. I guess being a civil engineer in Clearfield is about as busy a job as being a street-cleaner in Venice! Now you know all about me. Hope I haven't tired you out."

"No, indeed," replied Perry emphatically. "I like to hear about it. Say, you've been around a lot, haven't you? Were you born in Nebraska?"

"Me? Hombre, I'm a native son of this grand old state. My folks farmed it over near Petersboro before the Pilgrims bought their passage!"

"How did you happen to go to college away out there, sir?"

"Why—now, look here, I've talked enough. I'll tell you some day about that, if you say so, but if I don't quit now you'll think I'm wound up. You tell me things."

"What?" asked Perry, smiling.

"Well, what are you aiming to do when you get through cramming your head full of knowledge, friend?"

"I don't know. I used to think I'd be a doctor. That's what my father is. But lately—I don't know.

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There doesn't seem to be much money in doctoring."

"Be a civil engineer then and get rich," said Mr. Addicks gravely. "What's your line going to be, Shaw?"

"I'm going to be an author," answered Fudge earnestly.

"That's another of those well-paid professions. Guess what we'd better do is make a date to meet in the poor house in, say, twenty or thirty years!"

"Some authors make a lot of money," said Fudge.

"Do they? Maybe so. The only one I ever knew who had money in his pocket was a chap out in Laredo. Don't know as you'd call him an author exactly either; more of a poet. He traveled around on side-door Pullmans and sold poems at the houses. Said he was 'singing his way around the world.' Told me he sometimes got as much as fifty cents for a poem. Yes, he was what you might call a right successful author; one of those 'best-sellers' you hear about, I guess."

"What were the poems like?" asked Fudge.

"Well, I don't believe, between you and me and the shovel, he had more than the one, and that—let me see if I can remember it. How was it now? 'My name is——' I used to know that song, too. Wait a minute. I've got it!

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“My name is James O’Reilly,
I come from Erin’s sod
To sing my humble ballads
As round the world I plod.
I ask no gift from any man,
I pay my way with song.
The world is kind, and so I find
Each day I trudge along.’”

“I wouldn’t call that real poetry,” said Fudge critically.

“No more did he; he called it a song. Anyhow, it brought him money. If someone doesn’t happen in pretty quick and give me a job of surveying I’m going to steal that song and see what I can do with it! I suppose, now, you fellows don’t want any surveying done? My prices are cheap. This is bargain week.”

“I’m afraid not,” answered Fudge. “I guess there isn’t much——”

He suddenly stopped, mouth open, eyes round and glassy, and stared at his host.

“What’s the matter?” asked Mr. Addicks, following Fudge’s fascinated gaze. “Anything wrong with my hand?”

Fudge seemed to shake himself out of his daze. “N-n-n-no, sir!” he gulped. “Oh, n-n-no, sir! I j-j-just hap-hap-happened to th-th-think of something!”

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Mr. Addicks laughed dryly. "You're a remarkable young thinker, Shaw. I thought, by the way you were looking at my hand, that maybe I needed a manicure. Hello, going?"

"Yes, sir, I guess we'd better be getting home," said Perry. "We've enjoyed your—our visit."

"Have you? Well, I have, anyway. I was just naturally bored to death when you came. When you hear me trying to sing you'll know it's because I'm bored. Drop in again soon, fellows. I'm usually in in the mornings. Come around and I'll teach you that song." He chuckled as he opened the door for them. "I know some others too. 'Sam Bass,' for instance. I know thirty-four verses of 'Sam Bass,' and that's three more than any other chap at the 'Lazy K' knew!"

It was not until they were in the street that either of the boys spoke. Then Perry asked wonderingly: "For the love of mud, Fudge, what was the matter with you? You looked like a dying fish!"

"D-d-d-didn't you see?" asked Fudge tensely.

"See what?"

"The wh-wh-wh-white s-s-scar!"

"What white scar? Where?"

"On his arm!" replied Fudge, hoarsely, triumphantly. "The l-l-left one!"

CHAPTER XVI

SEARS MAKES A SUGGESTION

THAT Sunday evening there was an informal meeting at Guy Felker's house in the interests of the Track Team. Guy had asked a half-dozen fellows to come and talk over affairs, and Lanny, Harry Partridge, Arthur Beaton and Toby Sears had responded. Orson Kirke had excused himself by telephone and Jack Toll had simply failed to appear. Toby Sears was Senior Class President, the School's best broad-jumper and a fair quarter-miler. Sears was eighteen and a rather earnest chap on whose judgment the school always placed the utmost reliance. It was Sears who was talking now.

“What Guy has said is just about so. There isn't now and never has been enough interest in track and field athletics with us. Every year it's been increasingly difficult to get fellows to come out for the team. Considering the lack of material we've had to contend with, I think we've done

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very well. But this spring a lot of us have been hoping that things would be easier for the captain and the coach, for we want to make this year's victory over Springdale decisive. But, as Guy has told us, as things stand now the team is very one-sided. That is, we've got a lot of candidates for the field events and mighty few for the track. And here it is the first of May and the Springdale meet is little over a month off. Even if we found fellows now to come out and work for track positions there is scarcely time to develop them. And, for my part, I doubt that we can get any. Guy made a pretty good canvass of the school last month and I think he's got hold of about all the talent there is. Seems to me, then, that the only thing to do is for us fellows to see if we can't come to the rescue and round out the team better. I've never run a half-mile in competition and don't know what I could do, but I'm willing to try. That would give me three events but if they didn't come too close together I guess I could manage them. And it seems to me that there are others who could attempt more than they are attempting now. How about you, Harry? You're down for the shot and hammer, aren't you?"

"Yes, but I'll try anything once, Toby. The trouble is that I don't think I'm good for anything else, and a month is short time to learn new tricks."

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“Well, you know what you can do and can’t do. Still, I think that some others of us could double up, so to speak. We haven’t but one miler on the team, as you know. Smith is doing his best, but unless he travels faster than he did last year he won’t get a point. Springdale, from what I can learn, is especially strong this year at the mile, half and quarter and we’ve got to get some seconds and thirds in those events to have a chance at winning. Presser is willing to do all he possibly can, but he can’t turn out runners if he isn’t given material to work on. So, as I’ve said, it seems to me it would be a good plan to induce some of the fellows who are trying for field events to go in for track work. I don’t suppose it’s possible to take, say, a chap who has never done anything but jumping and make a good half-miler of him in a month, but if we can make him good enough to capture a third we’re helping our chances.”

“I think that’s a splendid idea,” said Captain Felker. “Of course, there are some of us who couldn’t take up more than we are taking. I, for one. I’d be willing enough, but you simply can’t run sprints or distances and do yourself justice at the pole-vault. Besides that, the arrangement of events interferes. But I do think there are fellows on the team who will be willing to enter two or, in

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some cases, even three events. I wish we could get up some enthusiasm for the mile and the half-mile. Fellows seem to hold off from those events as if they were poison. I dare say they think they're harder work. In a way they are, or, at least, they require a more sustained effort than the sprints and hurdles. And speaking of hurdles, we need a bigger field there. Lanny's got all he can manage with the sprints, although he intends to try the high hurdles too. The only fellow we have in sight now for the low sticks is Arthur here. We ought to have four men for every event on the program, and that's the truth of it."

"I'm willing to try the sprints if you think it will do any good," said Arthur Beaton. "I might push some Springdale fellow out in the trials, anyway."

"I'd suggest," said Partridge, "that Guy and Skeet get together and go over the list and see what can be done in the way you suggest, Toby. As I said before, I'll try anything anyone wants me to. Anything, that is, except the pole-vault. I don't want to break my neck!"

"There are about ten fellows trying for the sprints," said Lanny. "We don't need more than half of them. Why can't some of them be turned into hurdlers, Guy? Any fellow who can do the

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hundred on the flat can do it over the sticks if he's once shown how."

"Sure he can," agreed Harry. "Call a meeting of the candidates, Guy, and tell each one what's expected of him. Don't just say, 'Will you do this?' but tell 'em they've got to! Get Toby to talk to 'em and put some pep in 'em. Make 'em understand that we've got to lick Springdale next month and that——"

"The trouble is," interrupted Lanny, "that the fellows don't take track athletics seriously. It's got to be sort of the style to smile when you mention the subject. We've run so to football and baseball that we don't think anything else is worth while. Even the fellows who are on the team go around with a half-apologetic grin, as much as to say, 'I'm on the Track Team. Isn't it a joke?' What ought to be done in this school is to get track athletics back where they belong as a major sport."

"And the best way to do that," said Sears, "is to everlastingly wallop Springdale."

"Yes, but——"

"I think there ought to be more incentive for fellows to come out for the team," said Harry Partridge. "Of course, if a chap is fond of running or jumping or hurdling he's going to do it without persuasion, but there are lots of fellows, I guess,

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who have the making of good track or field men who don't realize it and don't think about it. Of course, it's too late this year, but next——”

“Well, it's this year that's worrying me,” broke in Guy. “Whoever comes after me can bother about next year.”

“Still,” said Sears earnestly, “we've got to work for the future as well as the present; or we should anyway. I've sometimes wondered if we couldn't enlarge the interest by holding a meet about the middle of the season, a handicap meet between classes. Once get a fellow interested and if he has anything in him he wants to get it out. And so he keeps on.”

“That's a good scheme,” agreed Guy. “Funny we've never thought of it. But it's too late for this spring. What we might do, though, is to hold an open meet and work up some enthusiasm that way. It would be a good thing, anyway, for the team.”

“Couldn't we get a meet with some other school?” asked the manager. “Highland Hall or someone.”

“Guy's scheme would answer the same purpose,” said Sears. “We could talk it up, get the candidates themselves interested in it and get the school interested, too. It might show us some material we didn't know of. Some fellows will do stunts

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in competition that they wouldn't think of in practice."

"Ought to be prizes, I suppose," said Lanny. "How about it?"

"Ought to be, yes," agreed Guy; "but where'd we get them? There isn't enough money to fix the track up decently."

"Instead of individual prizes for each event," offered Manager Beaton, "we might have a single prize for the best performance, or something like that."

That was discussed and eventually abandoned. As Guy pointed out, it would be a mighty difficult matter to decide which was the best performance and the awarding of the prize might lead to a lot of dissatisfaction amongst the less fortunate contenders. "We don't need prizes," he said. "We'll publish the names of the winners and that will be enough."

"Arthur's idea might be used, though," said Sears thoughtfully, "in the Springdale meet. How would it do to have some sort of a trophy to go to the fellow winning the most points for us?"

"What sort of a trophy?" asked Lanny.

"Well, nothing expensive, of course. It would be something to work for, and just now, when we want to induce fellows to take up new stuff, it

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mightn't be a bad idea to give them something—er—tangible to go after. Maybe just a pewter mug would do."

"Suppose two or three fellows scored the same number of points?" asked Arthur. "That might easily happen, mightn't it?"

"Yes, I suppose it might." Sears considered. "Then let each have possession of the mug for a certain time."

"Oh, your idea is to have the thing competed for each year?"

"Yes, don't you think so?"

"Tell you what," said Lanny. "Get some of the girls to make a stunning purple banner—no, pennant—and give it to the fellow who does the best work for us, as Toby suggests. In case two or more win the same number of points, take into consideration the fellows' performances. If two chaps each won, say, eight points for us, the one who made the better record for his event would get the flag. And then let him keep it and we'll find a new one for next year. Call it the Track Trophy and have it understood that, next to the Victoria Cross, it's the biggest honor you can win!"

"That's all right," assented Harry Partridge, "but it strikes me that a silver or even a pewter

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mug would make more of a hit than a pennant.”

“I don’t think so,” responded Lanny. “Besides,” he added, with a smile, “that mug would cost us money, and the pennant won’t!” The others laughed.

“Still,” said Arthur Beaton, “a few of us might dig down for it. You can get a pretty good-looking mug for three dollars.”

“Speak for yourself, old scout,” protested Guy. “I’m poorer than the Athletic Committee, and that’s pretty poor! Let’s make it a pennant. It doesn’t matter what it is, really, so long as it is understood that the thing’s worth winning. It could be made of silk and have a suitable inscription on it, like ‘For Valor’—— No, that wouldn’t do. ‘For Worth?’ ‘For——’ ”

“For Instance,” laughed Lanny. “Never mind an inscription. Just have ‘C. H. S.’ on it.”

“With a winged foot,” suggested Arthur.

“Then if I won it throwing the hammer,” said Harry Partridge, “it wouldn’t be what you’d call appropriate, would it?”

“In a general way——” began Arthur.

“I’ve got it,” interrupted Lanny. “A purple silk pennant with a green laurel wreath inclosing the letters ‘C. H. S.’ in white. How’s that?”

“Sounds mighty good-looking,” replied Sears,

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and the rest agreed. Guy Felker, however, was a trifle impatient of the subject.

"We can find a design easy enough later," he said. "The question is whether it's worth doing."

"It certainly is," asserted Sears, and the others agreed.

"Anything that will convince the fellows that it's worth while trying to do all they can for the team, is worth doing," said Lanny decidedly. "Remember, Guy, that you and Skeet have got to persuade chaps to go in for stunts they've never tried, in many cases."

"But won't it look," asked Arthur, "as if we were offering this pennant just to—to——"

"I get your idea," said Lanny. "How would it do if we kept out of it and let the girls offer it? We might suggest it to them and let them do the whole thing. Louise Brent would be a good one to start it up."

"That's better," said Guy. "We'll keep out of it entirely. Suppose you attend to the—the negotiations, Lanny. You're a popular chap with the ladies!"

"Let Toby do it," Lanny replied.

"It is moved and seconded that Lanny be appointed a committee of one to negotiate with Louise Brent in the matter of a purple silk pennant. All

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those in favor will so signify by raising their right hands. One, two, three, four. It is a vote, gentlemen." Toby bowed gravely to Lanny.

"All right," laughed the latter. "It's all up when Toby's in the chair, anyway! Any other business before the meeting, Guy?"

"No, I guess not. We'll see what can be done with persuading the fellows to try new stunts. Maybe it'll work out fine. I hope so. Much obliged for coming around, anyhow. I was getting a bit discouraged, to tell the honest truth. Skeet's been growling for days and wanting to know how I expected him to make a team out of nothing. And the trouble was I couldn't tell him! You fellows needn't run off so early, though."

"I'm going home and pile into bed," replied Lanny gravely. "From now on I shall take the very best care of myself because, you see, I mean to get that purple pennant."

"You?" jeered Harry Partridge. "You haven't the ghost of a show, you old tow-head! I only have to close my eyes to see that thing hanging over my mantel!"

"Huh! Open 'em again and wake up! Good-night, all!"

CHAPTER XVII

THE SQUAD AT WORK

ON Monday work for the Track Team entrants was no different than usual. Perry, one of a bunch of seven or eight sprinters, practiced starts, did two fifty-yard dashes and finally swung through the two hundred and twenty. There were no trails, nor were any of the number allowed to go faster than a "hustle," which was Skeet's term for a pace that was something like a glorified jog. Lanny, who was now giving three afternoons each week to track work, spent much of his time coaching the rest, and to him Perry owed his first real understanding of what might be called the philosophy of the crouching start. Lanny, watching Perry and two others at the mark, stopped proceedings.

"Just a minute, you fellows," he said. "Now, look here. You, Hull, and you, Soper, have got your holes placed wrong. Your front hole, Hull, is too far from the mark for you. You're losing

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distance every time. Put that front hole so that your instep will come opposite your right knee when you're down, and dig your hole deeper, man; that scratch in the ground doesn't give you any purchase. That's the ticket, dig it out. Now then, try that. Better? Hold on, though; you're straddled too much. The idea is that when you get away your rear foot will travel straight forward. Your back hole is too far to the right. Put it about here and see how it goes. That's the trouble with you, too, Soper. Your back hole is too far back and too wide of the line through your body."

The two boys followed instructions and presently tried another start. When they had run through their dozen or fifteen yards and walked back, Lanny began again.

"As near as I can tell, fellows," he said, "neither of you really understand why you're doing this. You appear to have the idea that when you start off you have to throw your body forward. The result is that you both go off with a jump and you don't get your stride until you're eight or ten yards away. Watch me a minute, please. You fellows, too; you're none of you getting off well. Now, then, fingers back of the mark, spread enough to carry your weight easily, but not tense; there ought to be a little spring to them as they lift.

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Now in setting your weight goes forward on your fingers and the *ball* of your left foot. Don't try to put your body over the line; only the head and shoulders. Now, when the pistol goes off, don't give a jump as though you were going to play leap-frog all the way down to the tape. Let yourself fall forward naturally, as you're bound to when you lift your hands, and then run. That's the whole idea of that start. You're falling forward and you run to keep from going on your face. Bring your rear foot forward on a straight line, raise your body slowly—don't jerk your shoulders up—and get your stride in the first three or four steps at the most. Don't try for long steps. Take short ones, at least at first until you learn to lengthen them without throwing yourself off. When you're running the hundred yards, fellows, about fifty per cent. of it depends on the way you get off your mark. Races are won or lost right there. The idea is to get away quick, *but* get your stride at once. Now, then, watch me and see how I do it."

That, thought Perry, as his gaze followed Lanny's bare legs twinkling down the path, simplified the business. No one had told him that it was the falling forward of his body that gave him speed in getting away from the mark. He had been, in fact, struggling against that very thing, try-

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ing to recover his equilibrium at the earliest possible moment and, in that effort, making his second step a kind of leap in the air and wrenching his head and shoulders backward with an awkward and often painful motion. The result had been that for at least a half-dozen strides he had been "running up and down." Having once grasped the "why and wherefor," Perry found that the crouching start was the simplest thing in the world! Not that he mastered it that afternoon or for many succeeding afternoons, but each time it came easier and eventually he found that he could reach his stride within three or four steps of the mark and at twenty yards be running at top speed.

That afternoon's work-out ended with a "hustle" over the two-twenty, and when, slowing up from that, Perry turned to seek Skeet and report, he caught a glimpse of Fudge, far down the field, hopping ludicrously on one foot with a shot poised in upstretched hand. Perry smiled sympathetically as the shot sped away for a scant thirty feet. Fudge, he feared, was not making a howling success of his athletic endeavors. There was a rumor of an impending cut in the squad and Perry wondered whether he and Fudge would survive it. He almost dared to think that he would, for, excepting Lanny and Kirke and, possibly, Soper, his work

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was as good as any so far. As for Fudge, however, he knew that Falkland, Partridge and Brimmer were all from six to eight feet better with the shot, and he doubted that Skeet would retain more than three fellows for the weight events. Having been released by the coach, with instructions to report a quarter of an hour earlier on the morrow, Perry sought the dressing-room, waited his turn at the shower, and finally dressed and went in search of Fudge. The shot-putters were not in sight, though, and, hesitating whether to remain and watch baseball practice or continue his search for his chum, he at last left the field and made his way back along Common Street to where, in the vacant block behind the field, the weight candidates were practicing with the hammer.

Partridge was in charge, and the squad consisted of Fudge, George Falkland and Thad Brimmer, while four or five spectators looked on from a safe distance behind the ring. Perry joined these and watched Harry Partridge whirl the twelve-pound weight and send it sailing far across the turf. None of them was making any great effort for distance, however, the matter of form still being the consideration. Fudge followed Partridge, and Perry, who had never yet seen his friend essay the hammer-throw, was prepared to resent the snickers

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or amused comments of the watchers beside him. But Fudge proved something of a revelation. Awkward with the shot he undoubtedly was, and it was much of a question whether he would ever learn to handle that object successfully, but when it came to throwing the hammer Fudge was another fellow. His sturdy body turned with the swinging weight, his arms outstretched, his feet twinkling marvelously above the trampled ground. Then he stopped quickly, the whirling hammer dipped, rose and, released, arched off like a shot from a mortar, and Fudge, recovering, pulled up with a foot against the wooden rim.

“Bully!” commended Partridge warmly. “That was all right, Fudge! And you see what I mean about not pulling back on the release, don’t you? That was mighty good form! Mighty good! Get your sweater on and keep moving. All right, George. Now see if you handle your feet better.”

Perhaps Falkland was so busy trying to manage his feet correctly that he forgot the flying weight. At all events, at the completion of the second turn the ball of the hammer struck the ground, plowed up a foot of the soft turf and sent Falkland head over heels before he could let go the handle! Fortunately, he picked himself up unhurt, and the laughter of the audience brought only a sheepish

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grin to his face. While he regained his breath Thad Brimmer took his turn. After that Falkland again tried and got the weight away without misadventure, although not to the satisfaction of Partridge. Fudge threw again and, while the result was not as good as that of his former performance, did very well. Partridge explained again, and again threw, and the practice was over.

"That was a peach of a throw, Fudge," commended Perry, as he ranged himself beside his friend. "I didn't know you could do it like that!"

"It isn't hard," replied Fudge carelessly, "if you know how." But he managed to convey by his tone that it *was* hard and that a great deal of credit was deserved by one William Shaw. "I guess the time before the last I must have made a hundred and fifty feet easy!"

Fudge's estimate was somewhat too generous, but Perry accepted it unquestionably and accorded admiration. He waited outside while Fudge performed his ablutions and arrayed himself in his street attire, and then, in the wake of the baseball players, they made their way back to town. Fudge, plainly pleased with himself, had a good deal to say regarding the gentle art of throwing the hammer, and Perry listened patiently until the subject was exhausted. Then, and by that time they

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were leaning against Fudge's front gate in the fragrant warmth of the May afternoon, Perry said:

"Say, Fudge, I've been thinking."

"Uh-huh," responded Fudge disinterestedly.

"About Mr. Addicks."

"Anything new?" asked Fudge eagerly. "Have you seen him?"

Perry shook his head. "No, but—but I've been thinking."

"You said that once," complained Fudge.

"Well, I don't believe he's so awfully bad, do you? He was mighty nice to us the other day, Fudge. Lots of folks would have kicked us downstairs if they'd caught us listening outside the door like that. And he doesn't—doesn't *look* bad, now does he?"

"N-no." Fudge shook his head in agreement.

"No, he doesn't. But we know he is, and——"

"But we don't know what temptation he may have had, Fudge," pleaded Perry. "Maybe he was starving or—or something. Of course, it isn't right to rob even if you are starving, but—but it makes it less bad, doesn't it? And, for all we know, he may be trying to be better and—and live it down, eh? See what I mean?"

"Sure, and that may be so, too." Fudge knit his

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brows and looked extremely wise. "Maybe he's repented."

"That's what I think," said the other eagerly. "And so it seems to me we'd ought to help him all we can, Fudge, instead of—instead of hunting him down!"

"We aren't hunting him down," objected Fudge.

"We have been. If we went to the police to-day and told all we know, they'd grab him in a minute, wouldn't they?"

Fudge kicked the fence-post and hesitated. "I suppose so," he replied finally. "Only, we wouldn't go to the police, Perry. We'd go to the express company, because they offer the reward."

"I don't want the reward," declared Perry warmly. "And neither do you!"

Fudge looked a little bit startled. "N-no——"

"Taking a reward for sending him to prison now when he's trying to lead a decent life and—and establish himself in business would be rotten! The money wouldn't bring anything but bad luck, either. No, sir, what we've got to do is stand by him and do all we can to help him, Fudge."

"Y-yes, but how can we? What can we do?"

"Well, for one thing, maybe we could see that he got some work. If he's going to stay honest,

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he mustn't be poor, because being poor is what leads folks to commit crimes, don't you see?"

"Playing the piano brings him money, doesn't it?"

"Not much, I guess. What we ought to do is to see if we can't find someone who will give him some civil engineering to do. I—I'll bet he's a good civil engineer, too!"

"So do I," asserted Fudge. "I'll bet he can engineer all around those fellows who did that work for Mr. Brent out there."

"That's what a civil engineer does, isn't it?" asked Perry. "I mean, lays out streets and bridges and—and things."

Fudge nodded. "And surveys things, too."

"Well, now, say, I was wondering whether we couldn't ask Morris to ask his father to give him a job."

"Give Morris a job?"

"No, Mr. Addicks. He's got a lot more land out there that hasn't been surveyed, I'll bet. And if Morris asked him to give some of the work to Mr. Addicks—of course, not all of it, but some of it—I guess he would. He's mighty fond of Morris."

Fudge considered silently. The idea struck him as being perfectly feasible, even brilliant, but he wished he had thought of it himself. After a mo-

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ment: "Morris isn't the one, though, to ask Mr. Brent," he announced.

"Who is?"

"Louise."

"I don't know her except to speak to, and I wouldn't like to ask her. You could, though, couldn't you?"

"Mm, maybe. I've got a better scheme than that, though, Perry. You listen. You know, Dick and Louise are great friends, and if we went to Dick and told him about Mr. Addicks and asked him to ask her to ask her father——"

"Yes, but I don't think we ought to tell anyone, even Dick Lovering, about Mr. Addicks."

"We don't need to tell him *that* part of it. We'll just say that he's a—a tip-top fellow, which he is, and that he's just come here and needs work like anything; that he has to live in one room and maybe doesn't have enough to eat, and how he worked his way through college running a livery stable, and lost his money in oil or something, and all that. Dick's just the fellow to help anyone like that. He—he just loves to help folks!"

"Well, if we could do it that way, without letting out about Mr. Addicks being a train-robber, it would be fine," replied Perry heartily. "Shall we, Fudge?"

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“Uh-huh, we’ll go around to-night and see Dick. I’ll just bet you anything that Mr. Brent could give him a lot of things to do if he wanted to. And I’ll bet Mr. Addicks is the fellow to do them, too!”

“Yes, there’s something about him that makes you know he’s smart,” confirmed Perry enthusiastically. “It would be dandy if we could help him—help him——”

“Get on his feet again,” supplied Fudge, whose literary efforts had provided him with a fine collection of phrases. “Yes, sir, and it’s great we thought of doing it, Perry.”

Perry was too pleased to challenge his friend’s use of the word “we,” and in a few minutes they had parted, having agreed to meet at half-past seven at the corner of Troutman and E Streets and put the case before Dick Lovering.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE OFFICER AT THE DOOR

DICK was just leaving the house when the boys arrived there that evening, and Eli Yale was awaiting him at the curb, but he instantly offered to return. Since the evening had turned cool, they went inside, seating themselves in the little room to the right that was at once parlor, living-room, library and Dick's study.

It was a comfortable, homelike little room, with a big table by the front windows whereat Dick studied and conducted his affairs, a smaller one, in the center of the warmly-hued carpet, flanked by two easy chairs,—one of which, a deeply tufted leather affair, was Dick's especial property,—a couch covered with a gaily colored Afghan robe, two book-cases, an old-fashioned foot-rest, more chairs and, curled up on one of them, a fluffy smoke-gray cat. Between the book-shelves was a fireplace and on the marble ledge above, a brass-

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dialled, ebony-cased clock ticked with dignified deliberation, keeping perfect time with the purring of Lady Gray. On the big table a green-shaded student lamp threw a pleasant light over the neat piles of books and papers. There was little that was either new or expensive in the room, but everything, from the oldest side-chair to the few pictures on the walls, proclaimed friendliness and comfort.

Fudge was the spokesman, and he managed to tell his story with commendable brevity, although he could not help embroidering it with a few harmless frills. Dick was interested at once. If he suspected that he was not being told quite all there was to tell, he made no sign. When Fudge had reached a slightly breathless but triumphant conclusion Dick nodded. "I'll be glad to speak to Louise," he said, "and to the others as well. I don't believe that Mr. Brent is employing any surveyors just now, for I think he has done all he is going to do on the addition at present. There's talk of re-locating the trolley line that runs over to Sterling and I believe he is not going to do anything more until that has been settled. But we'll do what we can, Fudge, the lot of us. If it's as bad as you say with this chap, he ought to have some work given him. Do you suppose he

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can do anything else if there's no engineering just now?"

"He can run a livery stable," said Fudge doubtfully.

"And punch cattle," added Perry.

"I'm afraid there isn't much chance of his getting a job at cattle-punching in Clearfield," Dick laughed. "All right, fellows, I'll speak about it this evening. I was just going to run over to the Brents' when you came. Look me up to-morrow and I'll tell you what the result is."

They took their departure, highly satisfied, and Dick sped away in Eli. When he reached Brentwood he found Louise and Lanny in absorbed discussion of the Track Trophy. Louise Brent was a tall, blue-eyed girl of fifteen, with a fair skin and much yellow-brown hair. She was attractive more on account of her expression than her features. Dick was made welcome and Lanny explained about the trophy, and the three laid plans and drew sketches for the better part of an hour. Louise was enthusiastic and promised to interest the other girls at once. "You just wait, Lanny," she said.

"It's going to be the most scrumptious pennant you ever saw. We'll get Lila Abbey to do the laurel wreath part. She's perfectly wonderful at that sort of thing. Oughtn't we to put it on a stick?"

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"I suppose so. And tie it with purple ribbons, eh?"

"Of course." Louise reflected, tapping a pencil against her white teeth. "It isn't going to be awfully easy, but we'll do it all right. When ought we to have it done?"

"Why, I guess there's no hurry. Any time before the Springdale meet will do, I think."

"Better have it on exhibition a week or so in one of the windows down town," suggested Dick.

"We can have it done in two weeks, I'm certain," said Louise. "I'll get a whole lot of the girls around here some afternoon and we'll work on it. And—and it's supposed to be our idea entirely, you say, Lanny?"

"Yes, we thought it would be better like that. You needn't tell the others that we know anything about it. Just sort of give them to understand that it's your idea and that Guy and the rest of us are tickled to death with it."

"I wouldn't want to pretend I thought of it," replied Louise, "because, of course, I didn't, but I don't suppose anyone will ask who did think of it. What we ought to do, first of all, I guess, is to make a pattern of it so as to get it just the right size."

"Ought to have a drawing made, I'd say," re-

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marked Dick, "so you'll know just where the lettering goes and all that."

"Oh, dear, you're just trying to make it harder!" sighed Louise. "You're quite right, though; only I'm sure I don't know who could do it. I know I couldn't. Could you, Lanny?"

"Great Scott, no! I can't draw a straight line."

"Oh, you'll find someone," said Dick reassuringly. "Or," struck by a sudden thought, "I'll tell you what, Louise. There's a chap here in town, a civil engineer named Addicks, who would probably be glad to make a drawing of the thing. I was going to speak to you about him later. He's out of work and having rather a hard time of it. Fudge and Perry Hull came to see me this evening just before I left the house and told me about him. The two kids were quite excited; wanted me to see you and ask you to try and get your father to give him some work. Philanthropy's rather a new stunt for Fudge, but he made out a bully case for the chap; got me all wrought up about him! Fudge says he has a room in that block where Ginter's Bakery is and cooks his own meals there and is frightfully hard up."

"The poor man!" said Louise.

"Yes, according to Fudge, he lives on sausages and bread and coffee."

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"Sausages aren't bad," said Lanny judicially. "Getting a bit late for them, though. If I were he, I'd switch to lamb chops."

"Don't be horrid," said Louise. "Of course I'll ask papa, Dick. And I'll just insist on his finding something for the poor man to do. I dare say papa knows the railroad people well enough to get them to give him work."

"The railroad people?" asked Dick.

"Yes, you said he was an engineer, didn't you?"

"Civil engineer, not railway, Louise."

"Oh! That's different, isn't it? Civil engineers survey things, don't they?"

"Correct," replied Lanny. "Have you forgotten the famous poem written by a civil engineer? Something about 'I'm monarch of all I survey; My right there is none to dispute'; remember?"

"That was Cowper," replied Louise scathingly. "And he was a poet, not a civil engineer."

"Oh, all right! Of the two I'd rather be the engineer, though, and live on sausages."

"Lanny, you're crazy in the head," laughed Dick.

"He's just silly," corrected Louise. "Papa has a good deal of surveying done, I think, Dick, and I'm sure he could find some for this Mister——"

"Addicks is the name," prompted Dick. "I wish

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you'd ask him, anyway. I suppose he isn't in this evening?"

"No, he and mamma went out to make a call. Maybe he will be back before you go, though."

"Does he usually stay out until midnight?" said Lanny innocently. Louise blushed a little.

"You're quite horrid this evening," she charged. "If you want me to make that pennant for you, you'd better behave yourself."

"I'll do the nicest thing I know," returned Lanny sweetly. "I'll go home!"

The next afternoon Clearfield played Fernwood High School on the diamond and beat the visiting nine decisively, 14 to 3. The work of the purple team was rather ragged and neither Haley nor Nostrand, both of whom pitched that afternoon, was in good form. Hits were frequent on both sides, but Clearfield's performance in the field prevented many runs by the visitors. Fernwood, on the other hand, had two bad innings, during which their infield threw the ball wild, and errors, coupled with some timely hitting by Bryan, Cotner and Merrick, in especial, enabled the home team to pile up a safe score before the game was half over. As Lanny was working with the track men that afternoon, his place was taken by Terry Carson, and the substitute caught a nearly perfect game

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until the eighth inning when a foul tip glanced away from a bat and split one of his fingers. After that McCoy went behind the plate, and it was a marvel that the visitors didn't pull the game out of the fire, for Sprague McCoy, an outfielder, was quite at sea in the backstop position. Nostrand, however, who was in the points during the last four innings, got himself together and managed to stave off two batting rallies. The incident opened Dick's eyes to the fact that a second substitute catcher was needed, and he and Captain Jones went a-hunting. It was Pete Robey upon whom their choice finally fell, and Pete found himself suddenly elevated from an insecure position amongst the rabble to a seat on the first team bench. But that was a day or two later. To-day Dick and Warner Jones were still discussing the matter when they left the field, and it was into that discussion that Fudge broke when he and Perry caught up with the older boys just as Dick swung himself into the run-about.

"Dick, did you find out anything last night?" asked Fudge eagerly.

"Hello, Fudge! Hello, Perry! Why, yes, something. Pile in here and I'll tell you in a minute. Let Perry sit in your lap, Warner, will you? Fudge, you squat on the floor."

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"Don't drag your feet, though," warned the captain humorously, "or you'll stop the car." He and Dick resumed their discussion of the catcher question and kept it up until Warner got out at his gate. When they trundled on Dick turned to the expectant Fudge.

"I spoke to Louise last night, Fudge, about your friend, and then she spoke to her father this morning. I suspect that he didn't much want to hire What's-his-name, but Louise is a very determined person and she finally got him to say that if this friend of yours would call on him at his office tomorrow morning—he's in New York to-day—he'd talk with him. Louise telephoned me at breakfast about it. She said Mr. Brent was very obstinate at first."

"That's b-b-bully!" exclaimed Fudge.

"Well, don't expect too much," warned Dick. "Mr. Brent isn't likely to hire him unless he can prove that he knows his business. I know enough about Mr. Brent to be certain of that, Fudge."

"Sure, but he does know his business! He's a very fine civil engineer."

"How do you know?" asked Dick gravely. "Has he ever done any work for you?"

Perry chuckled, and Fudge reddened a bit. "No, but—but you can t-t-t-tell he is, Dick!"

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"I see. Well, do you think he can draw?"

Fudge looked doubtfully at Perry, found no help there and replied sturdily: "You bet he can! He's a great drawer, he is!"

Dick smiled as he slowed down at Perry's gate. "I asked because the girls are going to make a silk pennant as a prize for the Track Team and they want someone to make a drawing of it to work by. I told Louise that perhaps this fellow Addicks could do it for them. Do you think he could?"

"I know he could," answered Fudge, with beautiful faith. "What's it for, this pennant?"

"Why, it's to go, I believe, to the fellow who does the best work for us in the meet with Springdale. It's to be rather a gorgeous affair; purple silk with green leaves and white lettering. Suppose you see Mr. Addicks and tell him about it and ask if he will do it. There isn't much money in it, because the girls have got to go to quite a little expense before they're through, I guess. Louise thought a dollar would be enough, but you could ask him what he'd do it for. If it wasn't much more than that, I guess they'd pay it. Mind doing that?"

"No, indeed! We'll do it right now. It's just around the corner. Want to come along?"

"Thanks, no, I've got to get home. Call me up

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this evening and tell me what he says. Much obliged, and I hope that job will pan out, fellows. Good-night!"

It was getting dark in the building when Fudge and Perry went in and climbed the stairs. Half-way up they encountered some of the workers in the glove factory, but after that the building seemed deserted. At the top of the last flight, though, they discovered that it wasn't, for, in front of Mr. Addicks' door at the end of the twilight corridor a bulky figure stood. As the boys looked the figure took on the appearance of a policeman. The policeman—they could see him more plainly now that their eyes had accustomed themselves to the half darkness—rapped loudly, imperatively on the door. He waited, and, as there was no response, he tried the handle. The door was locked. Then he bent close to the sign, as though making certain he was not mistaken, glanced up at the closed transom and swung around. Fudge dragged Perry forward and began an examination of the signs on the nearer portals as the policeman, walking almost noiselessly on rubber-soled shoes, passed them with a brief but searching glance. As his quiet footfalls died away in the hall below Fudge turned a wild, alarmed gaze on Perry.

"They're after him!" he whispered hoarsely.

CHAPTER XIX

THE TRAIN-ROBBER IS WARNED

MR. MYRON ADDICKS returned home rather later than usual that afternoon. Although he had knocked about the world a good deal during his twenty-seven years, and had put up with a good many discomforts, he had been telling himself of late that his present domicile was about as dreary and unsatisfactory as any he had ever endured. The best thing he could say of it was that the rent was cheap, cheaper than that of any other room he had been able to find in Clearfield. But there was little else to be said in its favor. There was no view to be enjoyed, the building was silent and lonely after dark—save in the basement, from whence a strong odor of baking arose every night—and a bath was almost an impossibility. Unfortunately, until his income had at least doubled itself, he could not afford to pay more, and this afternoon, tramping along a country road outside of town, he had reached the conclusion that

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any increase in his income was not to be expected and that the best thing he could do was to hit the trail back West. In short, he was rather discouraged to-day, a condition of mind very unusual with him, and when he entered the building to climb the two flights to his cheerless "home" he had just about determined to pack his battered trunk.

He stopped, as was his custom, to apply a match to the single gas-jet at the top of the first flight, and repeated the operation in the hall above. And having turned the key to his liking he heard his name spoken and looked into the anxious faces of Fudge and Perry.

"Hello!" he greeted them. "What are you fellows doing up here?"

His tone lacked warmth, but the boys didn't notice the fact.

"We came to see you about something," replied Fudge, in lowered voice. And then he glanced apprehensively toward the stairs. "Do you mind if we go in your room, sir?"

"Why, no; glad to have you." Mr. Addicks produced his key and opened his door. "Wait till I light up or you'll break your necks in here. Mighty nice of you boys to call." The gas shed light on the rather bare room and Mr. Addicks nodded

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at the chairs. "Sit down and confess all," he went on. "How's the world been treating you two?"

"All right, sir," answered Fudge hurriedly. "But that isn't it. What we want to tell you is that—that they're after you, sir."

"After me?" asked the other mildly. "Who is?"

"The—the police, sir." Fudge continued breathlessly. "We came up about a half-hour ago and he didn't hear us, I guess, and he knocked and then he tried the door. We made believe——"

"Whoa! Back up! Let's have this right, Shaw. You came up here to see me a half-hour ago and saw someone knock on my door and try to open it. Who was he?"

"A policeman, Mr. Addicks; a big, fat policeman. We made believe we were looking for another room and he went out again and we stayed here to warn you."

"Why, now that was kind of you," replied Mr. Addicks gravely. "But just why did you think I ought to be warned?"

Fudge hesitated. After all, it was not a pleasant task to inform a man that you knew him to be a criminal. Perry moved uneasily in his chair, but failed to come to his chum's assistance.

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"Come on," persisted Mr. Addicks. "We're all friends together. What's the idea, Shaw?"

Fudge threw a final appealing glance at Perry and plunged: "It's none of our business, sir, only I—er—I happened to see the notice in the express office and——"

"What notice?"

"About the train-robber. And then we—we came in the other day and couldn't help seeing the scar and—and knowing."

"What scar, Shaw?"

"On your arm, sir; the white scar just like the description says."

"The white—— Oh!" Mr. Addicks nodded comprehendingly.

"We haven't breathed a word to anyone, Mr. Addicks, but I guess they got on to you. And we thought you ought to know."

"Of course." Mr. Addicks' countenance held puzzlement and some amusement, and he was silent a moment. At last: "Let's have this just right now," he said. "You suspect me of being this train-robber and you think the police are after me. Is that it?"

"Y-yes, sir."

"The description of the robber fits me, does it?"

"Why, yes, sir, all except the height. I guess

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you're more than five feet and ten inches, aren't you?"

"Five feet, eleven. But that's near enough. What was the fellow's name, by the way?"

"He had two or three names. Edward Hurley was one of them, and another was Crowell, and—I don't remember the other."

"Fenney," supplied Perry subduedly.

"Ha!" Mr. Addicks arose from the table on which he had been seated, thrust his hands into his pockets and walked to the window. The boys exchanged expressive glances. After a moment's silent contemplation of the twilit world outside Mr. Addicks turned back.

"How do you suppose they found out?" he asked, in a low voice.

Fudge shook his head. "Maybe you left off your disguise some time, sir."

"My—my what?"

"Disguise; the mustache, sir."

"Oh, yes, the mustache. That's it, I guess."

"Yes, sir, you didn't have it on when you came in just now, you know."

"Careless!" sighed Mr. Addicks. "No wonder they spotted me. Well, what must be must be, boys!" He sank into a chair with a gesture of surrender. "I guess it's all up, hombres."

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"Couldn't you—couldn't you make your getaway?" asked Fudge, lowering his voice and glancing apprehensively toward the door. Mr. Addicks laid finger to lips, tiptoed across and suddenly threw the door open. Thrilled, Fudge and Perry leaned forward to look. The corridor, however, was empty.

Leaving the door slightly ajar, Mr. Addicks returned to his seat.

"You mean," he asked, "that I might get away before they came back for me?"

Fudge nodded.

"I wonder! You're certain you haven't told anyone, Shaw? Or you, Hull?"

"No, sir, we haven't," replied Fudge emphatically, even indignantly. "We haven't said a word to anyone. We—we thought at first you were a safe-breaker," he added apologetically.

"What made you think that?"

"I don't know exactly. Of course, we knew you weren't just an ordinary thief, sir; we could see that; and so I—we thought maybe that was your line."

"You wronged me there," said Mr. Addicks, in hurt tones. "I've never cracked a safe in my life, Shaw."

"I'm sorry, sir. Only—how did you get the

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money from the express car at Cartwright? Didn't you have to break the safe open?"

"Oh, that? Why, you see—but, look here, what made you first suspect me?"

"I guess it was the disguise. Besides, we knew you were playing the piano at the theater just for a—for a bluff."

"So you knew that, eh?" muttered Mr. Addicks. He viewed Fudge with admiration. "It's a good thing you're not on the police force, Shaw, or I'd have been nabbed long ago. You're a regular Burns!"

Fudge strove to disguise his delight in the praise, and Perry broke into the conversation anxiously. "Don't you think you'd ought to be going, sir?" he asked. "They may come back any moment."

"You're right." Mr. Addicks referred to a tin alarm clock on the table. "Ten after six," he muttered. "It's a desperate chance, but I'll take it." He disappeared into the closet and returned with a much-worn valise which he placed, open, on a chair. "Now then, let's see." He glanced frowningly about the room. "I can't take much with me. I guess I'd better foot it to the next town and jump the train there. Maybe they won't be looking for me. Boys, I don't want to drive you away, but if they should come and find you here they might

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suspect you of tipping me off. I wouldn't want you to get into trouble on my account, and it might go hard with you if they found it out. Better get out while there's time."

Fudge looked uneasy. "Well, maybe we had," he murmured. "They might put us through the third degree and make us tell."

"That's just what they'd do," said Mr. Addicks convincingly. "I'm mighty grateful to you fellows, and if the thanks of a train-robber are of any value to you——"

"*What's that?*" asked Perry, startled. With a swift leap Mr. Addicks reached the gaslight and turned it out. In the darkness they listened with straining ears. No sound reached them, however, beyond the usual noises from the street. "I thought," muttered Perry apologetically, "I heard something."

"I g-g-guess," said Fudge, as Mr. Addicks lighted the gas again, "I g-g-guess we'd better go."

"Yes," whispered Mr. Addicks, "don't run any risks. Good-by, boys. Take care of yourselves and, whatever you do, remain honest." He shook hands with Fudge and then with Perry. "Remember that honesty is the best policy and take it from me that there's nothing in train robbery. A fellow hasn't got a fair chance nowadays."



“‘What’s that?’ asked Perry, startled”

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"Couldn't you—if they don't get you this time, sir, couldn't you—" Perry faltered embarrassedly—"couldn't you reform, sir?"

"I'll try, Hull, I swear to you I'll try." Mr. Addicks seemed quite affected and, after the door had closed behind them, they thought they heard a sob. They stole noiselessly down the stairs. On the sidewalk Fudge drew a deep breath of relief as he glanced left and right and saw no policeman.

"Gee, I hope he gets away," he whispered huskily.

Perry nodded. "So do I. He—he's a mighty nice fellow. What do you say if we stay around until he goes, Fudge? I'd like to be sure he gets away, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, but it wouldn't be safe. They might—might connect us with his escape. Why, even now they may be watching the building! Come on, but don't walk too fast. Try to look careless, Perry."

So, looking careless, they reached the corner, but there, to Perry's surprise, Fudge seized him by the arm and dragged him on. "We've got to throw them off the track," he muttered. "They may follow us."

Silently they proceeded another block and then, when Fudge had turned quickly and glanced back

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along G Street, they slipped around the corner, cut through a yard and climbed a fence, dodged past a house and finally gained Troutman Street.

"There," said Fudge, with satisfaction, "I guess we've thrown them off all right." He stopped a moment, made a silent investigation and added darkly: "I hope they tear their pants on that fence the way I did!"

"It must be awfully late," said Perry. "I guess I'll go back this way; it's shorter."

"Better not," warned Fudge. "Come on to F Street. They might see you."

"I hope," mused Perry as they went on down the block, "I hope he will try to reform, Fudge. He doesn't seem what you'd call a hardened criminal, does he?"

"No, he doesn't. I guess there's a lot of good in him, Perry. I dare say he will get away safely and go back out West and settle down just like you or me."

"I do hope so." Perry sighed. "I liked him a lot, Fudge."

"Me, too. I wish he wasn't a criminal, that's what I wish. And, oh, shucks, now he can't do that drawing! I'll have to tell Dick that he left town unexpectedly. Say, let's do something to-

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night, Perry. Think your folks'll let you go to the movies?"

"I'll ask them. I ought to study, but—but I guess I'm too excited." Perry laughed softly. "Say, a fellow doesn't save a train-robber from the police every day, does he?"

"I guess not! I guess if the fellows knew what we'd been up to to-day they'd open their eyes!"

"I suppose, though, we oughtn't to tell them."

"Hm, well, not for a long while," answered Fudge.

As Fudge had remained away from the theater for some time, his mother, after extracting a promise to get up early and study his lessons before breakfast, at last consented to let him go, and Fudge was leaning over Perry's fence promptly at twenty minutes to eight and whistling his doleful signal. Perry joined him without his cap and spoke subduedly.

"Will you wait a few minutes, Fudge?" he asked apologetically. "Dad and mother are going with us. Do you mind very much?"

Fudge kicked the base-board of the fence, a reckless thing to do considering the condition of it, and finally replied with a noticeable lack of enthusiasm: "Of course not—much. What they going for, Perry? I didn't know they *ever* went."

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"They don't. Only dad took it into his head that he'd like to see what the movies are like, and ma said she'd go, too. I'm sorry."

"Well——" Fudge stopped and then asked hopefully: "Do you think they'll pay for me, Perry?"

"I guess so," was the doubtful answer. Further conversation across the fence was prevented by a summons for Perry, and a minute or two later the quartette was on its way to the theater. To Fudge's satisfaction, Doctor Hull, directed by Perry, attended to the trifling matter of tickets and they filed in. The slight delay had allowed the front half of the house to fill and they were obliged to seat themselves fifteen rows back, a location not at all to Fudge's liking. Fudge derived great enjoyment, in the interims between films, from observing the orchestra, and from back here all he could see well was just the man at the piano, and the man at the piano was the least interesting——

"Why, Fudge Shaw, what *is* the matter?" exclaimed Mrs. Hull.

"N-n-nothing, ma'am," replied Fudge chokingly.

"Aren't you well?"

"Y-yes'm."

"You don't look it. You sure you don't feel faint?"

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“No’m—yes’m, I mean. I—I just had a twinge.”

Mrs. Hull viewed him doubtfully and a trifle disapprovingly and turned to the Doctor to confide her belief that Fudge was by no means a satisfactory companion for Perry. Whereupon Fudge dug his elbow painfully into Perry’s ribs and whispered excitedly:

“Perry, look down there!”

“Where? What?” demanded the other, squirming out of the way of Fudge’s energetic elbow.

“What is it?”

“The man at the piano! Look at him!”

Perry looked and gasped and looked again. Surely that back and those shoulders and that head belonged to——

At that instant the piano player turned to speak to the violinist and the boys gazed, astounded, on the false mustache and smiling countenance of Mr. Addicks, the train-robber!

CHAPTER XX

MR. ADDICKS EXPLAINS

FUDGE and Perry gazed spellbound.

There was no chance of mistake, even at that distance. Before them, smiling, unconcerned, sat Mr. Myron Addicks, one hand resting negligently on his hip, the other on the keyboard of the piano. No one would ever have suspected him of being a fugitive from justice! Presently, quite as though he had nothing to fear nor an enemy in the world, he turned and looked calmly over the audience. Fudge's gasp was painful in its intensity, and Mrs. Hull's thoughts sped to peppermint tea. Then the lights went down, the orchestra broke into tuneful melody and the entertainment began.

But all through the performance the two boys shivered whenever a footstep came creaking along the aisle or there was a sudden stir behind them. They had visions of the entire Clearfield Police Force, led by the stout and intrepid Chief, filing

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down the passage-way and clapping the hand of the Law on the shoulder of the cowboy-pianist. That the performance came finally to an end without anything of the sort happening was almost unbelievable. The boys accompanied the Doctor and Mrs. Hull home, talking in excited whispers all the way but reaching no satisfactory conclusions regarding Mr. Addicks' strange actions. The Doctor, who had been innocently surprised and delighted with his first experience of moving pictures, frequently interrupted their conversation with questions and reminiscences and they reached the gate before they realized it. Perry's request to be allowed to walk half-way home with Fudge was firmly denied and the latter took his departure with a last whispered: "I'll be around at seven, Perry. Be ready!"

What was to happen at seven in the morning, what he was to be ready for, Perry didn't know, but the mysterious command added further interest to an already absorbing state of affairs and Perry presently went to bed to participate in the wildest and weirdest adventures that ever befell a sleeping youth!

He was up at a little after six, dressed by half-past and waiting on the front porch in a patch of sunlight. Fudge, in spite of his good inten-

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tions, was late and it was almost a quarter past seven when he appeared hurrying down the street. Perry joined him on the sidewalk and Fudge, linking arms, conducted him around the corner.

"We're going to see him," he said determinedly. "If he hasn't gone already maybe he can get away before they look for him."

He hadn't gone. Fudge's peremptory knock was followed by the sudden opening of the door and the vision of a surprised and pajama-clad Mr. Addicks confronting them. Fudge allowed no time for questions. He pushed past the puzzled train-robber, followed by Perry, and motioned the door shut. There was no evidence of hurried flight in view. The room looked quite as usual. The screen had been removed, revealing a tumbled cot-bed evidently very recently occupied, and on a one-burner stove, connected with the gas bracket by a tube, stood a sauce-pan of water which was already bubbling about the edges. Other indications of breakfast were there; two eggs and a tiny coffee canister and a half loaf of bread adorning a corner of the table. Fudge's voice was almost stern as he confronted Mr. Addicks.

"Why didn't you beat it?" he demanded in a hoarse whisper. "Do you *want* to get pinched?"

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Mr. Addicks politely controlled a yawn and viewed Fudge with puzzlement. Then he scratched his head, picked up a tattered dressing-gown and slipped into it and, seating himself on the bed, thrust his hands into the pockets of the robe and spoke.

“Look here, boys, what is this?” he asked plaintively. “I’m an awful poor performer before breakfast.”

“But—but you said you were going last night!” said Fudge accusingly. “And we saw you playing the piano at the theater! Why, they might have nabbed you any minute!”

Mr. Addicks shook his head. “I was disguised,” he replied.

“That’s no disguise,” said Fudge contemptuously. “You’re taking awful chances, sir. Couldn’t you get away now before they start to look for you?”

“Before I’ve had my breakfast?” demanded the man weakly.

“Well, wouldn’t you rather go without breakfast than have it in jail?” inquired Fudge impatiently. “If you start right now you might get the seven-forty train. I don’t believe they’d be watching the station so early, sir!”

Mr. Addicks’ expression became gravely curi-

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ous. "Now, look here, hombres," he said, "this is just play, isn't it?"

"Play!" gasped Fudge. "What do you mean, play?"

"Why, this police business, of course. I mean, you don't really believe that I'm that train-robber hero of yours, do you?"

Fudge's jaw dropped and he stared blankly. Finally: "Do you m-m-mean that—that you aren't?" he asked in a small voice.

Mr. Addicks shrugged. "Naturally I mean that, Shaw. I thought yesterday that you fellows were playing a game and I entered into it for the fun of it. But when you burst in at half-past seven in the morning and want me to leave town without any breakfast—well, I quit. You'll have to find someone else for the part, old chap!"

"And you're not the train-robber?" gasped Fudge.

"My dear fellow, I never robbed a train in my life. Sorry to disappoint you, but—well, there it is!"

"Then—then w-w-what have you done?" Fudge demanded.

"Not a thing," laughed Mr. Addicks. "Shaw, you'll have to reconstruct your ideas of me. I'm

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not the man you want at all. I never robbed a train or cracked a safe or even snatched a purse. I'm just an unromantic sort of a dub with no criminal record at all."

"I just knew it," murmured Perry, relieved.

Mr. Addicks glanced at him and smiled. "Thanks for your good opinion, Hull," he said. "Now, fellows, let's thresh this out. How did you get it into your head I was the train-robber, Shaw?"

Fudge, still mazed and a bit incoherent, did his best to explain. He told the story from the start, acknowledging that for a while he had only half-pretended to believe in the theory of Mr. Addicks' criminality, but owning that the notice in the express office, coupled with blue eyes and a scar on the left fore-arm, had ultimately convinced him. Several times during his recital Mr. Addicks chuckled amusedly, and when Fudge had reached a somewhat lame finish he pulled back the sleeves of his dressing-gown and pajama jacket.

"What sort of a scar was it?" he asked gravely.

"It—it was a white scar about two inches long, sir," stammered Fudge.

Mr. Addicks held out his arm for inspection. "Have a look," he said. Perry and Fudge looked. Then Fudge turned the arm over. Then he lifted

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surprised eyes to Mr. Addicks. "It m-m-m-must have b-b-been the other one!" he said.

Mr. Addicks obligingly bared the right arm. Neither one showed any sign of a scar! Fudge was plainly dazed.

"B-b-but I s-s-s-saw it!" he muttered. Mr. Addicks laughed.

"So did I, and it must have been the day you were here that first time. I upset the tooth-powder that morning—my toilet accommodations are a bit sketchy, you see—and got some on my arm. I found it there that night. I guess that was the scar you saw, my friend."

Fudge gazed helplessly from Perry to Mr. Addicks and back to Perry. His expression was too ludicrous for Perry to view with a straight face and suddenly the latter burst into a laugh. Mr. Addicks joined him. Finally Fudge followed suit, although a bit sheepishly. And when the merriment was subsiding he pointed an accusing finger toward the table.

"How about th-th-that?" he demanded.

"That" was a luxuriant brown false mustache lying on the table.

"Eh? Oh, the 'disguise,'" chuckled Mr. Addicks. "Well, I'll tell you. That *did* look bad, I guess. You see, I was pretty nearly broke when

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I struck this place and found that my inheritance was nothing more than a full-grown, man-size mortgage. So I looked around for something to do until I could get a start at surveying. I couldn't find anything until I happened on an advertisement in the paper for a pianist at the theater. Well, playing in a theater orchestra didn't seem to me to be just what you'd expect a civil engineer to do. I thought that perhaps if people knew I did that they wouldn't consider me much good as a surveyor. So I concluded I'd wear that mustache as a sort of disguise. I had a lot of trouble with it at first. Got to the stage door one day without it and had to go back for it. And once it dropped off on the piano keys, but no one noticed it, fortunately. This leading a double life is trying, fellows!

At that moment the sauce-pan on the little stove began to boil over and Mr. Addicks jumped up and rescued it.

"We'd better be going along, I guess," said Perry. "You haven't had your breakfast, and neither have we."

"I'd ask you to have some with me, only, as a matter of fact, my larder is pretty empty this morning. Tell you what, fellows, drop around after the theater this afternoon and we'll go on

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with the trial. Now that I've started, I'd really like to convince you that I'm a respectable member of society."

"We believe it already," replied Perry, with a grin.

"Sure," agreed Fudge. But his tone held deep disappointment, and Mr. Addicks, noting it, laughed.

"Shaw, you almost make me wish I really was a train-robber or something desperate!" he said. "I suppose you'll never take any more interest in me after this."

Fudge smiled, a trifle embarrassed.

"And," continued Mr. Addicks, "I can't much blame you. That reward sounded pretty good, I'll warrant!"

"R-r-reward!" blurted Fudge. "Gee, you don't suppose we were looking for that reward when we came here and warned you s-s-s-so you could get away!"

"That's true, Shaw. I beg your pardon. You acted like a good pal there, and I thank you. You too, Hull. You both of you acted white. By the way, is everything quite cleared up? Any little things you'd like explained?"

"N-no, sir, I guess not," replied Fudge. "Still, about that policeman——"

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"Oh, Lafferty? Well, Lafferty's rather a friend of mine and sometimes drops in for a smoke. That's all." Mr. Addicks chuckled. "Lafferty would be interested if he knew! But I shan't tell him. Will you come around again and see me later?"

"Yes, sir, thank you," replied Perry. "And Fudge isn't *really* sorry you're not the train-robber, Mr. Addicks; are you, Fudge?"

"Of course not!" Fudge grinned. "Anyway, it was a lot of fun while it lasted!"

"That's all right, then," said their host heartily. "Glad you don't hold it against me. I know that a civil engineer isn't as interesting as a desperado, fellows, but you drop in now and then and maybe we can scare up some excitement, eh? And if you ever want a nice job of surveying done, why, you let me know, and it won't cost you a cent."

"S-s-surveying!" exclaimed Fudge. "We forgot to t-t-t-tell him!"

"That's so," Perry agreed.

"It's Mr. B-B-Brent, sir. You're to g-g-go and see him this forenoon and maybe he will have some w-w-w-work for you."

"You really mean it?" asked Mr. Addicks. "Jonathan Brent, over at the mills? What makes you think so?"

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Whereupon Fudge, Perry assisting, explained, and when he had finished Mr. Addicks insisted on shaking hands with them both very hard, so hard that their fingers ached for minutes afterwards.

"You chaps are a couple of bricks!" he told them delightedly. "I don't see why you took the trouble for me, but I'm certainly obliged. I hope Mr. Brent will come across with the job. Even if he shouldn't, I thank you just the same. What sort of a man is he, by the way?"

"He's a small man," replied Fudge uncertainly. "Sort of wrinkled. Looks right through you and out behind. Kind of scares you at first, I guess. He's got a lot of money and made it all himself. Gives a heap of it away, though, they say. I guess," he summed up shrewdly, "that if you don't let him scare you, you'll get on all right."

"I'll try not to," answered Mr. Addicks gravely. Perry smiled. The civil engineer didn't exactly look as if he would be easily frightened! And then Fudge recalled Lanny's message about the design for the pennant.

"Dick said they couldn't pay very much for it," he explained apologetically, "but maybe a couple of dollars——"

"A couple of fiddlesticks! It won't cost them a cent. I'll be glad to do it. We'll talk it over

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this afternoon and I'll make a sketch and you can show it to your friend. I'm only sorry I'm not doing it for you chaps."

"Well, you will be, in a way," replied Fudge very gravely. "You see, that pennant's to go to the fellow making the most points in the Springdale meet, and it's as good as mine right now!"

Two days later there was a new pianist at the moving picture theater, for Mr. Addicks was busy with level and pole on a piece of work that would occupy him at least a fortnight. And while there had been no promise of further employment, the surveyor was pretty certain that Mr. Brent meant to keep him at work for some time to come. In any case, he had made his start, and the false mustache reposed nowadays on the wall of his room surrounded by the penciled features of a villainous-looking individual whom he called "Edward Hurley, the Noted Train-Robber." A card appeared in the *Reporter* announcing that Myron Addicks, Civil Engineer, was at the service of the public, and a neat black-and-gold sign was hung outside the entrance to the building. Later still Mr. Addicks rented the adjoining room and used it for an office and workshop. Gradually it assumed a most business-like appearance. A long table held fascinating drawing instruments and

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squares and protractors and strange black rubber triangles and curves and rolls of tracing cloth and printing-frames, to say nothing of paints and inks simply begging investigation! To Fudge that room was a never-failing source of delight, and, since he and Perry soon became fast friends with Mr. Addicks, he had frequent opportunities to test its pleasures. By summer both he and Perry had dedicated themselves to the profession of civil engineering and were doing remarkable things with compasses and ruling-pens and little black rubber squares. It was, I think, shortly after the close of school that Fudge commenced his ambitious task of mapping the City of Clearfield! But I am far ahead of my story.

The design for the Track Trophy was made, submitted and enthusiastically approved. The pennant itself was completed a week later and was placed on exhibition in a window of Cosgrove's jewelry store. A placard neatly printed by Mr. Addicks reposed beside it and explained that it was to be awarded as a prize to that member of the Clearfield High School Track Team winning the greatest number of points at the annual meet with Springdale High School. It was really a very handsome trophy and Louise Brent and her aids had done themselves proud. The pennant

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was twenty-four inches in length and fourteen inches in height, of heavy purple silk. A wreath of green laurel leaves enclosed the letters "C. H. S." in white. Purple satin ribbons held the pennant to a gilt staff, and altogether it formed a prize well worth striving for. And so most of the Track Team members thought.

Besides inciting the members of the team themselves to greater endeavors, the trophy aroused a new interest in and enthusiasm for track and field athletics throughout the school. Fellows who had never for an instant contemplated going out for the team were heard regretting the fact that they had allowed others to dissuade them and promising that next year they'd show something!

Meanwhile May hurried along with sunny skies—and some cloudy ones for variety—and the baseball players began to meet opponents worthy of their skill and the Track Team, imbued with a new enthusiasm, worked their hardest.

CHAPTER XXI

ON THE TRACK

BY the middle of the month the Track Team comprised twenty members, several less than coach and captain had hoped for. By a good deal of intricate scheming those twenty were apportioned over the seven track and five field events so that in each Clearfield would be represented by not less than three wearers of the purple. In many cases a second was the best that Captain Felker dared hope for, in some cases a third would be all he expected. A number of the fellows were being coached in things they had never dreamed of undertaking. George Tupper, for instance, who had run fourth last spring in the 440-yards, had been prevailed on to drop that event and go in for the mile, since the four-forty was represented by three more promising performers and the mile run was left to Toll and Smith. In the same way, Thad Brimmer, whose specialty was the weights, was induced to make a third com-

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petitor in the high jump. Lanny White, who was entered for both dashes and the high hurdles, entered for the low hurdles also. Soper, a fair sprinter, developed remarkably as a broad-jumper.

Of course there were disappointments at first in what Arthur Beaton humorously called "intensive track athletics." That is, several fellows selected for events that were new to them failed absolutely to show any ability and had to be switched to something else. Neither Coach Presser nor Captain Felker hoped to develop extraordinary talent in this way. What they desired to do was to be represented in each event by at least three contestants and so possibly gain here or there a point or two that would otherwise go to Springdale. When the final arrangement was completed there were four entries for the 100-yards dash, the 220-yards dash, the hammer-throw and the shot-put, and three for each of the other events on the program. Lanny White was to attempt more than any other member of the team, being down for four events, and several others were down for three. Naturally, Lanny did not expect to be placed in each of his races, but there was always the chance of crowding a Springdale fellow out in the trials. In the dashes Lanny was fairly certain of getting a first and a second, if not two

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firsts, and he hoped to get placed in the high hurdles. Perry Hull had attempted to show form as a broad-jumper, but after a week of it had convinced Skeet that that was not his forte. In the end he was slated for the sprints only.

Perry had his second time-trial on the seventeenth of the month and Skeet announced the time as 10 $\frac{3}{5}$ for the hundred and 24 $\frac{3}{5}$ for the two-twenty. Neither performance was remarkable, but Perry had a strong belief in his ability to better them both; and, in any case, he had performed as well as any of his teammates except Lanny and Kirke in the hundred and Lanny in the two-twenty. Lanny told him he had done finely and assured him that in another fortnight he would be able to cut another fifth of a second from his time. "And if you do," said Lanny, "you'll stand as good a chance for second place as any of the fellows. I don't think that Springdale has a sprinter who can do better than two-fifths this year. It will be a corking race for second place!"

Perry was encouraged and his enthusiasm arose to new heights. For the next week he clamored for another time-trial, but Skeet denied him. Instead, he insisted on Perry working well over his distance for days after that trial, and neither he

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nor the other sprinters were once allowed to show their real speed.

Meanwhile, Perry was observing such strict rules of diet that Mrs. Hull was in despair. Perry's natural liking for pie and cake was sternly repressed and his mother became frequently quite impatient and said that training was a piece of foolishness and that Perry would soon be only skin and bones unless he ate more. There seemed to be some justification for her fears, for the steady work on the cinders was certainly carving Perry pretty fine. He had not been by any means fat before, but now he was getting down to his muscles, and one morning when his mother surprised him on his way to the bath and viewed the slimness of his legs as revealed by a flapping dressing-robe, she sent up a wail of alarm and forthwith sought the Doctor, declaring that "this running just had to be stopped or Perry would starve to death before their eyes! He looks right now," she said, "like one of those Indian famine victims!" But the Doctor declined to become concerned. "He's better off as he is, Mother," he replied. "A fifteen-year-old boy doesn't need fat."

"But he's not eating anything!"

"You mean," the Doctor chuckled, "he's not eating pie and cake and a mess of sweet truck. I've

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failed to notice, though, that he has ever refused a third helping of meat and vegetables lately! Suppose, instead of pie and chocolate layer-cake, you make some simple puddings, my dear; tapioca, rice, corn-starch. I guess he will eat those all right; and they'll be a lot better for him."

Mrs. Hull retired unconvinced, but afterwards forbore to predict disaster when Perry refused pie. Experiments with the simple desserts the Doctor had suggested were fairly successful. Perry referred to a diet-list that was pinned beside his bureau and relaxed to the extent of partaking sparingly of the puddings.

Fudge, too, was denying himself prescribed dishes, although with far less philosophy than was displayed by his friend. Pie with Fudge was a passion, and cakes containing oozing jelly or soft icing filled his soul with beatitude. When all else failed, he fell back on doughnuts. To be cut off from these things was a woeful experience to Fudge. Once he had "trained" for the Football Team, but that training had been a very sketchy performance; nothing at all like the awful self-denial he practiced—or, at least, strove to practice—now.

"I don't mind not eating starchy things," he confided to Perry one day, "but this breaking away

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from the table when the pie comes on is fierce! I haven't had a hunk of pie," he added drearily, "for three weeks, and there's a place right here"—he laid a sympathetic hand over the third button of his vest—"that won't be happy until it gets it!"

However, to make up for the discomforts of dieting, he had the satisfaction of accomplishing Herculean stunts with the twelve-pound hammer. Partridge already viewed him as a probable point-winner, for he had nearly equaled Falkland's best performance and had out-distanced Thad Brimmer by four feet. It was well that Partridge, and Guy Felker, too, dealt out praise and encouragement to Fudge, for the temptation to backslide in the matter of pie dogged him incessantly. There was one tragic night when he lay in bed and fought for all of an hour against the haunting vision of three raisin pies sitting side by side in the pantry downstairs. What eventually vanquished temptation was the knowledge that if he stole down and cut into one of those pies his mother would know it. And after all the fine-sounding speeches he had made to her on the subject of denying one's appetite for the sake of the School, he hadn't the heart for it.

Now that the School had "taken up" athletics it was a lot more fun practicing. Whereas hereto-

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fore scarcely a dozen fellows had watched the performances of the Track Team, now the daily practice was almost as popular as baseball and squads of critical but enthusiastic youths stood about the track and applauded and urged on their friends. The hammer-throw was sufficiently spectacular to attract a large gallery every afternoon, and I'm not denying that Fudge strutted a little when, having tossed the weight far away across the field, he allowed some admiring acquaintance to help him on with the crimson dressing-robe he affected.

Over at Springdale great things were said of the local Track Team, and the Springdale paper even now predicted victory. Guy Felker and the others studied that paper every day and compared what they learned of the Blue team's performances with what they knew of their own, sometimes with satisfaction and more often with alarm. There was no disguising the fact that Springdale would send a team more than ordinarily strong in the quarter, half and mile events and in the jumps. The Blue was likely to prove weak in the sprints and hurdles and at present seemed about on a par with the Purple in the hammer-throw and shot-put. Springdale's best performer with the shot was credited with thirty-nine feet and two inches, but Skeet

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declared himself skeptical about that. Arthur Beaton spent hours at a time drawing up predictions of the outcome of the dual meet which proved, to his satisfaction at least, that the Purple would win by a good fifteen points. But Beaton was notably an optimist.

The plan of holding a School meet was abandoned owing to the small number of members, but, on the twenty-first of the month the entrants in each event were allowed to compete against each other and the results were posted. Skeet did not, however, publish times or distances, although they were made known to the contestants. In the dashes Lanny finished first with ease, Kirke getting second place in the hundred-yards and third in the two-twenty. Perry tied with Soper for third place in the short distance and finished fourth in the two-twenty. Since, however, a blanket would have covered all the sprinters but Lanny at the finish of that race, fourth place was not vastly different from second. The time was disappointing, but the track was soft after an all-night rain and Skeet didn't seem troubled when he snapped Lanny ten and two-fifths for the hundred and twenty-four and three-fifths for the longer sprint. The high hurdles went to Lanny and Beaton finished only three yards behind him. Peyton fell at

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the second hurdle and was a poor third. In the low hurdles Lanny was swept off his feet by Peyton and had to work hard to beat out Beaton for the next honors. The jumps developed poor performances, but in the pole-vault Guy Felker surprised himself and everyone else by doing ten feet and one inch, bettering the school and the dual record by two and a half inches. That and Partridge's shot-put of thirty-seven feet and two inches were the only notable performances that afternoon.

The mile run proved a good deal of a fizzle. Smith, considered the only dependable entrant for that event, had cramps and dropped out on the third lap, and Toll and Tupper fought it out together, Toll finishing well in the lead in the slow time of six minutes and twenty seconds. Evidently the result of the mile was a foregone conclusion since it was well known that Springdale's best miler had a record of five minutes and five seconds. The half-mile was a good race—Todd, Lasker and Train finishing in that order, the winner's time being two minutes and fourteen and one-fifth seconds. The quarter-mile saw Todd, Sears and Cranston running bunched until the final fifty yards, when Sears forged ahead and finished with his head up in the fair time of fifty-four and four-fifths sec-

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onds. In the hammer event, which wasn't finished until after six o'clock, Partridge won handily with a best throw of one hundred and twenty-six feet and seven inches. Falkland was second with a hundred and twenty-one feet and three inches and Fudge was third at a hundred and eighteen feet and six inches. Thad Brimmer was in poor form and was several feet behind Fudge.

The contests brought out many faults not displayed previously, and to that extent were useful. Possibly, too, they served to accustom new members of the team to the conditions of competition. At any rate, the fellows enjoyed them, and the audience did too. There was one member of the audience who, seated in the grandstand, watched events with a deal of interest. This was Mr. Addicks. As it was Saturday and work was for the time slack, he had treated himself to an afternoon off. No one paid any attention to him; few, indeed, observed him; certainly neither Perry nor Fudge. He would have liked to have gone down on the field and mingled with the throngs along the track and about the pits, but since he was not a High School fellow he thought he might be trespassing. There was no ball game to-day to divide attention, for the Nine had gone off to play against, and, incidentally, get drubbed by Temple-

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ton College. Mr. Addicks watched the sprints and hurdle events critically and found no fault with Lanny White's work. Lanny, he concluded, was a born sprinter and hurdler and only needed better training to become a master of those arts. With the rest, though, he was far less satisfied. Indeed, he frowned a good deal over the running of the other three competitors. He didn't remain until the end, but left the field after the quarter-mile run. He had wanted to see Fudge's performance with the hammer, for Fudge had talked rather importantly of it of late, but he couldn't see that event taking place anywhere and didn't think to look outside the field. On the way back to town he stopped in the telegraph office and made use of a telegram blank to write a brief note. This he dropped through the letter-slot in Dr. Hull's front door, and Perry found it awaiting him when he got home. It read:

ALKALI IKE: Come and see me this evening if you can. If not, in the morning. Death to traitors!

DEADWOOD DICK.

Ever since he had learned of the boys' suspicions regarding him, Mr. Addicks had humorously insisted on applying such picturesque aliases to them and himself. Fudge was "Four-Fingered Pete,"

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usually, although sometimes he was addressed as "Willie Rufus, the Boy Detective." Perry was variously "Alkali Ike," "Doctor Watson" or "The Apache Kid." Perry smiled as he read the missive, got Fudge on the telephone and announced his purpose of calling on Mr. Addicks after supper and instructed Fudge to join him there, and then descended hungrily on the contents of the table. He was very full of the afternoon's proceedings and, although he didn't suspect it, I fancy his father and mother were relieved when the meal was over and he grabbed his cap and disappeared.

He found Mr. Addicks working at a drawing-table in the new room into which he had moved a few days before, but his host laid aside pen and ruler, square and compass, and took him into the old apartment, now a trifle more comfortable by reason of the acquisition of a second-hand easy-chair. Into this he forced Perry and took his own position as usual on a corner of the table.

"I saw you run to-day," he announced, "and I want to talk to you about it."

"Were you there?" asked Perry. "I didn't see you. Why didn't you let me know?"

"I sat in the stand. I didn't know whether they'd want me on the field."

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"Shucks, everyone comes on. I wish I'd known you were there. What—what did you think of it?"

"The field?" asked Mr. Addicks innocently.

"No, I mean the—the sprinting and all."

"I thought that fellow White was a mighty clever runner, Perry. I don't know that I ever saw a chap handle himself much better. Of course he wasn't half trying to-day. He didn't have to. I'd like to see him when he was pushed."

"He's fine, Lanny is," said Perry admiringly. "And Kirke is pretty good, too, didn't you think? He got second in the hundred, you know."

"That his name? Well, he's not the sprinter White is. Is that little thin fellow your trainer? The fellow in the brown-and-white sweater?"

"Yes, that's Skeet Presser. He used to be a champion miler; or maybe it was half-miler; I forget."

"Is he considered a good coach?"

"Oh, yes, sir! He trains at the Y. M. C. A., you know."

Mr. Addicks smiled. "Well, that ought to be conclusive, Perry! But let me ask you something now. Who taught you how to run?"

"Why, he did; he and Lanny. Lanny coaches the sprinters sometimes."

"White, you mean? Well, did either of them

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ever tell you that you ought to use your arms in running?"

"My arms? No, sir, I don't think so. Skeet told me I wasn't to let my arms get behind me."

"That was clever of him," said Mr. Addicks dryly. "Have you ever watched your friend White run?"

"Yes, lots of times."

"Ever notice what he does with his arms?"

Perry hesitated. "I don't think so, particularly."

"Well, you should. Look here, Perry, you're not really running, my boy. You made a nice start to-day in the two-twenty and you used a nice stride when you found it, which wasn't until you were pretty nearly to the tape, but you waved your arms all over the lot and never once used them to help your running. Now if you're ever going to do anything in the sprints, or in the distances, either, you've got to learn how to use your arms. A sprinter runs with three things, Perry; his legs, his arms and his head. You use your legs fairly well, although you're trying to get too long a stride for a chap with legs the length yours are; and I guess you'll learn to use your head well enough when you've been in a few races; but you aren't getting anything out of your arms; in fact, you're

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slowing yourself up, the way you're beating the air with them." Mr. Addicks slid off the table. "Suppose I wave my arms like this when I'm running. Think that's any help to me? Not a bit, old scout. Get your arm action and leg action together. Rip them forward, like this; left leg, right arm, right leg, left arm. That way you're pulling yourself along. But don't just hold them out and paddle your hands, or trail them behind your hips or hug your chest with them the way one of you chaps did to-day. See what I mean at all?"

"Yes, I think so. I never knew about that, though."

"Of course you didn't if no one told you. Not one of you fellows except White ran in decent form to-day; and if someone would tell him not to throw his head back as far as he does he'd do better yet. What the dickens does this Skeet fellow think? That you kids can find out all these things without being told? Why, great, jumping Geewhillikins, there are all sorts of things to be learned if you're going to be a real sprinter! It isn't just getting off the mark quick and running as hard as you know how to the tape. There's science in it, old scout, a heap of science!"

"I suppose there is," replied Perry a trifle de-

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jectedly. "And I don't suppose I'll ever be real good at it."

"Why not? Don't expect to be a ten-flat hundred-yard man yet, though. You're too young and your legs are too short and your lungs aren't big enough. For two or three years the two-twenty will be your best distance. You can't hustle into your stride and move fast enough to compete with older fellows in the hundred. But, if you'll realize that in the two-twenty you can't push all the way, you may make a good performer. You have a pretty fair style, Perry. I like the way you throw your heels without 'dragging,' for one thing. But what I've just said about trying all the way through the two-twenty is so. It can't be done; at least, it can't be done by the average sprinter. Get your stride as soon as you can after you're off the mark, then let your legs carry you a while; I mean by that don't put all your strength into the going; save something for the last thirty yards or so. Then let yourself out! Remember that the hundred-yards is a hustle all the way, but the two-twenty is just a hundred and twenty yards longer and the fellow who tries to win in the first half of the race dies at the finish. Of course, it all comes by trying and learning. Experience brings judgment, and judgment is what a sprinter

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has to have. You'll soon find out just about how much power you can spend in getting away and how much you can use in the first twenty seconds and how much you'll need for the final spurt. Only, until you have learned that, play it safe and don't try all the way. If you do you'll finish tied up in a hard knot! See what I mean?"

"Yes, sir, thanks."

"Try it and see if I'm not right." Mr. Addicks perched himself on the table again and swung a foot thoughtfully. "I wish I had the coaching of you for a couple of weeks," he said. "I'd make a two-twenty man out of you or I miss my guess!"

"I wish you had," replied Perry wistfully. "No one told me all that, Mr. Addicks. Couldn't you—I mean, I don't suppose you'd have time to show me, would you?"

"I'm afraid not." Mr. Addicks shook his head. "I'd like to, though. I guess the trouble with this Skeet fellow is that he's got so much on his hands he can't give thorough attention to any one thing. Still, I should think he'd see that his sprinters are making a mess of it. White ought to savvy it, anyway." He was silent a minute. Then: "Look here," he said abruptly, "what time do you get up in the morning?"

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"About seven, usually. Sometimes a little before."

"Seven! Great Snakes, that's halfway to sundown! That the best you can do?"

"No, sir, I could get up a lot earlier if I wanted to."

"Well, you get up a lot earlier some morning and we'll go out to the track and I'll show you what I'm talking about. Swallow a cup of coffee, or whatever it is you drink in the morning; that's all you'll need; we won't try anything stiff. What do you say to that?"

"Why," replied Perry eagerly, "that would be dandy! Will you really do it, sir? When?"

"To-morrow—no, to-morrow's Sunday. How about Monday? Be outside your house at six and——"

Mr. Addicks was interrupted by a knock on the door, and, in response to a lusty "Come in!" Fudge entered.

"Ah," exclaimed Mr. Addicks, "we have with us to-night Arizona Bill, the Boy Hercules!"

CHAPTER XXII

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THAT early morning session at the track didn't come off on Monday because it was raining hard when the alarm clock which Perry had borrowed for the occasion buzzed frantically at a quarter to six. It had been agreed that should it be raining the event was to be postponed. So it was Tuesday when Mr. Addicks gave his first lesson. He was already in front of the house when Perry hurried out. He was enveloped from neck to ankles in a thread-bare brown ulster beneath which he wore an old pair of running-trunks and a faded green shirt.

"Thought it might do me good to take a little exercise while I'm out there," he explained. "I haven't had these things on for years, and wasn't sure I'd kept them until I rummaged through my trunk. Couldn't find my shoes, though." Perry saw that he was wearing a pair of rubber-soled canvas "sneakers" which had probably been white

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a long time ago. "How are you feeling? Ever up so early before?"

"A few times," Perry laughed. "Usually on the Fourth."

"Had anything to eat or drink?"

"No, sir, the fire wasn't lighted. I'm not hungry, though."

"Better have something inside you. We'll stop at the drug store and get some hot malted-milk."

This they did, and then went on to the field. It was a fine, warm May morning, and after yesterday's showers the world looked and smelled fresh and fragrant. They found the gates at the field locked, but it was no trick at all to climb over the fence. Fudge had agreed to meet them there with his stop-watch, although Mr. Addicks had assured him that a time-trial was unthought of, but he was not on hand nor did he appear at all that morning. Later he explained that the maid had forgotten to call him.

Inside, Mr. Addicks threw off his ulster and, while Perry got into his running togs, stretched his long legs and surprised his muscles by various contortions to which they were long unused. Perry was soon back and Mr. Addicks put him on his mark and sent him away at little more than a jog. "Head up," he instructed. "Shorten your stride.

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That's better. Don't be afraid to use the flat of your foot. Running on your toes is too hard on your legs. Now swing your arms, Perry. Drive 'em out and pull 'em back, boy! No, no, don't make an effort of it. Just easy, just easy. That's better."

Mr. Addicks trotted alongside to the turn and then called a halt.

"That's enough. Now get your breath and watch the way I do it. Watch my arms particularly."

He crouched for a start, unlike the usual sprinter holding but one hand to the ground. Then he launched forward, caught his stride almost at once and ran lightly back along the track, his long legs scarcely seeming to make any effort and his arms reaching forward and back, his body twisting slightly above the hips from side to side. It was pretty work, and even Perry, who had never seen many runners, realized that he was watching one who was, allowing for lack of recent practice, a past-master. After that he was sent off again and again, for short distances, at scarcely more than a trot until he at last solved the philosophy of the arm movement. He had begun to despair of ever getting the hang of it when, suddenly, he awoke to the realization that, for the first time since he

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had been running, legs, arms and body were working together in perfect unison! He had the novel sensation of being a well-oiled machine of which every part was timing absolutely! He slowed down at the corner and returned to his instructor with shining eyes, triumphant and slightly astonished.

"I did it!" he exclaimed. "I did it then, Mr. Addicks! Did you see me?"

"Yes, you got it at last. Notice the difference?"

"Yes, indeed!"

"Of course you do! Before you were fighting with yourself. Now your muscles all work together. Sit down a minute and rest. Then I want to see you start from the mark down there and come fairly fast to the corner. See how quickly you can get your stride and your form. Run easily to about that white mark on the rim up there and finish hard."

Because Perry feared that the others would think him silly, he had sworn Fudge to secrecy regarding the early-morning lessons, and Fudge, who was as communicative a youth as any in Clearfield but could be as close-mouthed as a sulky clam on occasions, kept the secret, and no one but Mr. Addicks, his pupil and Fudge knew until long after what went on at Brent Field between six and seven on fair mornings. Perry learned fast, part-

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ly because he was naturally an apt pupil and partly because Mr. Addicks was a patient and capable instructor. When a point couldn't be made quite clear with words Mr. Addicks stepped onto the cinders and illustrated it, and Perry couldn't help but understand. I think Mr. Addicks got as much pleasure, and possibly as much benefit, from the lessons as Perry did. He confessed the second morning that what little running he had done the day before had lamed him considerably, and declared his intention of getting back into trim again and staying there. At the end of a week he was doing two and three laps of the track and never feeling it. Fudge, who joined them occasionally, became ardently admiring of such running as that of Mr. Addicks' and regretted that he had not gone in for the middle distances. "That," he confided to Perry one morning, "is what I call the p-p-p-poetry of motion!" And he managed to make it sound absolutely original!

Mr. Addicks insisted that Perry should specialize on the two-hundred-and-twenty-yards dash, and coached him carefully over almost every foot of that distance, from the moment he put his spikes into the holes and awaited the signal, until he had crossed the line, arms up and head back. Perry, who had been complimented on his starting, dis-

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covered to his surprise that he was very much of a duffer at it. Mr. Addicks made him arrange his holes further apart in each direction and showed him how to crouch with less strain on his muscles. And he showed him how to get away from the mark with a quicker straightening of the body, so that, after a week of practice, he could find his stride at the end of the first fifteen yards and be running with body straight and in form. And then at last one morning there came a time-trial over the two hundred and twenty yards and, with Fudge sending him away and Mr. Addicks holding the watch at the finish, Perry put every ounce of power into his running and trotted back to be shown a dial on which the hand had been stopped at twenty-four and one-fifth!

“Why—why——” stammered Perry breathlessly, “that’s a fifth under the time Lanny made last year!”

“That doesn’t signify much,” replied Mr. Addicks. “This time may be a fifth of a second wrong one way or another. And you must remember that White probably made his record when he was tired from the hundred yards. Anyway, it’s fair time, Perry, and if you can do as well as that in the meet you’ll probably get second place at least.”

Fudge, hurrying up to learn the result, stuttered

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rapturously on being told. "I t-t-t-told him he'd m-m-m-make a p-p-peach of a s-s-s-sprinter! D-d-d-didn't——"

"You did," laughed Perry. "Couldn't I try the hundred now, Mr. Addicks?"

"Not to-day, son. Too much is enough. We'll try that some other time. Don't work too hard this afternoon, by the way. It's easy to get stale at this stage of the game. And the meet is less than two weeks off."

"Gee," sighed Fudge, "I w-w-wish you'd sh-sh-show me something about th-th-th-throwing the hammer!"

"I would if I knew anything about it, Fudge. But I thought you were getting on swimmingly."

"Pretty fair, sir. Only Falkland keeps on beating me by four or five feet every time. I wish I were taller, that's what I wish! He's almost six inches taller than I am and his arms are longer."

"You might wear stilts," Perry suggested.

"Or put French heels on your shoes," laughed Mr. Addicks.

Fudge sighed dolefully and then brightened. "Anyway," he said, "I can beat Thad! And he's older than I, and bigger, too."

"Whatever happens," said Mr. Addicks as they

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crossed the field, "I've got to see that meet, fellows!"

"Of course," agreed Fudge. "Mr. Brent will let you off, won't he?"

"It isn't Mr. Brent who has the say so," replied the other with a smile. "It's my pocketbook, Fudge."

"Oh! But I thought you were making a heap of money now, sir. You went and took that other room and—and all."

"That's why I'm still poor, Four-Fingered Pete. Earning an honest living is hard work. Sometimes I think I'll go back to train-robbery."

"Aren't you ever going to forget that?" wailed Fudge.

Baseball was now well into mid-season. Seven games had been played, of which two had been lost, one tied and the rest won. A Second Team, captained by Sprague McCoy, was putting the regulars on their mettle three afternoons a week and was playing an occasional contest of its own with an outside nine. Dick Lovering was fairly well satisfied with his charges, although it was too early to predict what was to happen in the final game with Springdale, nearly a month distant. The pitching staff was gradually coming around into shape now that warm weather had arrived. Tom

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Haley, still first-choice box-artist, had pitched a no-hit game against Locust Valley and of late had gone well-nigh unpunished.

The Templeton game had been somewhat of a jolt, to use Captain Jones' inelegant but expressive phrase, inasmuch as Templeton had been looked on as an easy adversary, and Joe Browne, in process of being turned into a third-choice pitcher, had started in the box against them. Joe had been literally slaughtered in exactly two-thirds of one inning and had thereupon gone back to right field, yielding the ball to Nostrand. But Nostrand, while faring better, had been by no means invulnerable. Even if he had held the enemy safe, however, Clearfield would still have been defeated, for her hitting that day was so poor that she was unable to overcome the four runs which Templeton had piled up in that luckless first inning. The First Team had to stand a deal of ragging from the Second Team fellows when they got back, for the Second had gone down to Lester-ville and won handily from a hard-hitting team of mill operatives who had claimed the county championship for several years. To be sure, the Second Team fellows had returned rather the worse for wear, Terry Carson having a black eye, Howard Breen a badly spiked instep and

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McCoy a bruised knee, but still they had conquered!

The first game with Springdale—they played a series for two games out of three—was scheduled for the fourth of June at Clearfield. The second contest was to be held at Springdale a week later, which was the date of the dual meet, and the third, if necessary, was to take place at Clearfield on the seventeenth. Just now it was on the first of these contests that the eyes of Dick and Captain Warner Jones and the players themselves were fixed. Dick was anxious to get that first game, whatever happened afterwards. In the second contest Clearfield was to do without the services of Lanny as catcher, for Lanny was due on that day to stow away some thirteen or fourteen points for the Track Team, and while Pete Robey could be depended on to catch a good game, Lanny's absence from the line-up was bound to be felt. So Dick was out after that first encounter, realizing that with that put safely on ice he would be able to accept a defeat the following Saturday with a fair degree of philosophy. Perhaps, fortunately for the nine, two other members who had tried for the Track Team had failed, and Lanny was the only one who stood to make history in two branches of athletics this spring.

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Bert Cable, last year's captain, labored indefatigably and was of much assistance to Dick who, handicapped as he was by his infirmity, was forced to do most of his coaching from the bench. That was an extremely busy week for the Clearfield High School Baseball Team, and Gordon Merrick confided to Lanny on Thursday that if Dick sent him to the batting-net the next day he would probably go mad and bite someone. "Why, last night," he said, "I dreamed that Tom and Nostrand and Joe Browne and two or three others were all pitching to me at once! My arms are still lame from that nightmare!"

"Well, there won't be anything very strenuous to-morrow," Lanny comforted. "In fact, you'll get off easier than I shall, for I've got to do track work."

"You're an idiot to try both," said Gordon. "What's going to happen to us next week, I'd like to know, with Robey catching."

"Oh, Pete will get along all right. In fact, he's a mighty good catcher, Gordon."

"He's all right at catching, but a child could steal on him. He can't get the ball down to second to save his life until the runner's brushing the dust from his trousers!"

"Well, with Tom Haley pitching the runner

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ought not to get a start off first. Tom's the one who can hold 'em."

"Maybe, but I'll bet you anything they steal a half-dozen times on us."

"Don't let them get to first," advised Lanny. "That's the safest plan."

"Yes, safety first," agreed the other. "How many races are you down for next week, Lanny?"

"Four, sprints and hurdles. But I may not run them all. It depends on who qualifies. If Arthur and Eg Peyton get placed for the low hurdles I'll probably drop out. By the way, that young Hull is quite a find, Gordie. I wouldn't be surprised to see him get a second in the two-twenty. He's developing into a mighty spry youth. Runs nicely, too. Lots of form. Funny thing is he never tried the sprints until this spring."

"I guess Skeet is a pretty good trainer, isn't he?"

"Y-yes. Yes, Skeet's all right. The only trouble with Skeet is that he can't seem to get it into his head that our chaps are just youngsters. He expects them to stand a lot of hard work and then can't understand why they get tired and loaf. Still, he's all right, and I wouldn't be a bit surprised if we won this year."

"Well," Gordon laughed, "with you taking part in most of the stunts, I don't see how you can

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help it. How many points are you supposed to annex, anyway?"

"Thirteen or fourteen; fourteen if I'm in luck."

"How many do we have to have to win? Fifty-something, isn't it?"

"Fifty-four ties. Anything more than that wins. Arthur has it doped out that we're to get firsts in six events; both sprints, the high hurdles, the quarter-mile, the pole-vault and the shot-put, and enough seconds and thirds to give us sixty points."

"First place counts five and second place three——"

"And third place one. I don't remember just how Arthur arrives at his result, but he gets there somehow. It's going to be a good meet, anyhow, and I'm sorry you won't be here to see it."

"Maybe I shall be," responded Gordon pessimistically, "if Dick doesn't stop batting practice. I've only got two arms, and they won't swing many more times without dropping off! I'd like to see you run away from those Springdale chumps, too. I suppose you'll win that purple pennant the girls have put up."

"Don't know about that. I wouldn't object to having it. It's mighty good-looking, and purple goes well with my complexion."

"Complexion!" jibed Gordon. "You haven't

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any more complexion than a board fence. By the way, did you see that they were patching the fence to-day?"

"Yes, and I hear they're going to fix up the track for us a bit before the meet. Wonder where they're getting the money. Last time I heard anything about it they had about sixty cents in the treasury."

"We've had two or three pretty fair-sized crowds out there so far. I dare say the Corwin game brought in fifty or sixty dollars."

"And they got a third of it. Well, I don't care where the money comes from. I'm glad they're going to mend the track. I'd hate to have Springdale see it the way it is."

"I think it's silly to fix it. They ought to leave it the way it is and pray for rain. Then maybe some of the Springdale chaps would fall in the puddles and drown."

"You've got a mean disposition," laughed Lanny.

"I've got a very fine disposition," returned Gordon with dignity, "but it's being ruined by Dick Lovering and batting practice. Bet you anything I don't get a single hit Saturday."

"That's right, don't; make 'em all doubles! By the way, they'll probably work that left-hander of

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theirs against us in the first game. I wish we had more left-hand batters."

"That will give Breen a show, maybe. He and Cotner and Scott are our only port-siders, I think."

"Nostrand bats left-handed. If Springdale pitches Newton, Dick may use Nostrand instead of Tom Haley. I hope he doesn't, though. Nostrand's a pretty fair pitcher, but he can't hold them on the bases the way Tom can."

"No, and he scares me to death every time he pegs across. I always expect the ball to go over my head. He needs a lot of practice throwing to first."

"He's a corking good fielder, though, Gordie. Don't forget that. Well, here's where I leave you. What are you doing this evening?"

"Nothing special. I've got some chemistry work to make up, though. Why? Anything doing?"

"Come on over to Morris's. He's fixed some electric lights over the tennis court and is going to try and play at night."

"Don't remember being invited."

"What of it? It isn't a party."

"All right, but don't expect me to play. It's too much like swinging a bat! Stop by for me."

CHAPTER XXIII

OUT AT THE PLATE!

CLEARFIELD turned out well on Saturday for the first Springdale game, while the visitors swelled the proceeds by filling most of one whole section behind third base. The day was fair but rather too cool for the players, with a chilly east wind blowing down the field, a wind that puffed up the dust from the base-paths, whisked bits of paper around and interfered to some extent with the judging of flies in the out-field. Springdale was in holiday mood, armed with a multitude of blue banners and accompanied by a thick sprinkling of blue-gowned young ladies whose enthusiasm was even more intense than that of their escorts. Clearfield's cheerers had to work hard to equal the slogans that came down from that third-base stand, and Toby Sears, cheer-leader, was forced to many appeals before he got the results he wanted.

Clearfield's line-up was the same she had pre-

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sented in Wednesday's game against Benton: Bryan, 2b.; Farrar, cf.; Merrick, 1b.; Scott, 3b.; Cotner, 1f.; Jones, ss.; White, c.; Browne, rf.; Nostrand, p. Haley was expected to go to the rescue if needed, and seven substitutes adorned the bench and hoped to get into the game. Springdale started with her left-hander, Newton, on the mound, and Newton, who was a big, lazy-looking but quite competent youth, disposed of Bryan, Farrar and Merrick without difficulty. Neither team hit safely, in fact, until the last of the third, when Lanny managed to land a short fly just beyond third-baseman's reach. But Lanny, although he reached second on a sacrifice bunt by Browne, didn't see the plate, for Newton registered his third strike-out against Nostrand and caused Bryan to hit into second-baseman's hands.

In the fourth inning Springdale had a batting streak that lasted until she had men on third and second with but one out. Then Tom Nostrand passed the next batsman, who had a reputation for long hits to the outfield, and, with the bases filled and the blue flags waving hopefully, he struck out the next two opponents. The cheer that went up from the Clearfield stand when the last man turned away from the plate was undoubtedly plainly heard on the other side of town!

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Clearfield's inning produced plenty of thrills. Farrar went out, shortstop to first, but Gordon drove a clean safety over second and went to third when Scott doubled to right. Cotner did his best to sacrifice to the outfield, but the result was a foul back of first and a second put-out. The Springdale catcher made two bluff throws to second, hoping to coax Gordon to the plate, but the trick didn't work. With two balls and one strike against him, Captain Jones refused the next delivery and had the satisfaction of hearing it declared a ball. Then Newton floated a slow one over for a second strike and, with the Clearfield coaches howling like wildmen and the Purple's supporters shouting from the stands, tried to cut the outer corner of the plate. Warner spoiled it and the ball glanced into the seats. On third Gordon danced and ran back and forth, while Scott, halfway between third and second, dared a throw. Again Newton wound up and again he stepped forward, and the ball sailed straight along the groove. Gordon dashed up the path from third, bat and ball met and Captain Jones sped to first. Scott rounded the last corner and headed for the plate just as the ball bounded into the hands of the second-baseman. The latter had plenty of time to peg across to first ahead of Warner Jones, but something, perhaps the

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sight of the two runners flying home, made him hesitate for one fatal instant. When the ball did reach the first baseman's impatient glove Jones was crossing the bag.

Scott slid unchallenged past the plate and tallied the home team's second run, and Clearfield exulted strenuously and waved purple flags. Two runs looked very large just then, but Dick wanted more and sent Lanny after them. Jones had instructions to steal on the second pitch and Lanny to hit it out if he could. Newton drove Lanny back from the plate with his first delivery and it went for a ball. Then, after throwing twice to first to teach Jones discretion, he sailed a low one over. Lanny swung at it but missed and Jones beat out the throw to second by an eyelash. Clearfield howled its glee. That steal upset Newton and he allowed a pass. With men on second and first and Joe Browne up another tally seemed quite within the bounds of reason, but Newton found himself again and, working Browne into the hole with two strikes and one ball, fooled him on an outshoot that looked very wide of the plate. Clearfield shrieked disapproval of the decision, but disapproval didn't put the runners back on the bases or return Browne to the plate. Still, two runs were two runs, and, unless Springdale did a lot better

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than she had been doing, would prove sufficient to win the game.

The fourth and fifth passed uneventfully. Springdale worked hard and took advantage of everything, but luck was against her when Cotner ran back to the shadow of the fence in deep left and pulled down a long fly that might easily have been good for two bases. Springdale had a runner on first at the time and Cotner's spectacular catch undoubtedly robbed her of a tally. After that Scott threw out the next batsman and Bryan tossed to Jones on the following play. In her half Clearfield got one man to first on balls, but watched the succeeding three retire on easy outs.

It was in the sixth that Springdale began to look dangerous. Dick had substituted Breen for Joe Browne, in the hope that the former would take more kindly to Newton's delivery, and it was Breen who was directly responsible for what happened. Nostrand disposed of the first batsman easily enough, but the next man waited him out and finally, after popping fouls all over the place, secured a pass. The next man laid down a slow bunt toward the box and Nostrand fielded to Jones. The latter, however, failed to complete the double. The following batter hit safely past Scott and sec-

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ond and first bases were occupied. Springdale's catcher was up now and he had so far proved an easy victim to Nostrand's slow ball. But this time the signs failed. With two strikes against him he managed to connect with a waister and sent it arching into short right field. Gordon started back, but it was quite evidently Breen's ball, and Breen was trotting in for it. But something happened. Perhaps the wind caught the sphere and caused the fielder's undoing. At all events, the ball went over Breen's head by several feet and two runs crossed the plate!

In the ensuing dismay and confusion the batsman slid safely to second. Springdale stood up and yelled like mad, and, after a minute of dismayed silence, Toby Sears managed to arouse the purple-decked seats to response. But the Clearfield cheering was lacking in conviction just then! Breen, feeling horribly conspicuous out there in right field, ground his fist into the palm of his glove and gritted his teeth. Captain Jones' voice came back to him cheerfully:

"Never mind that, Howard! Let's go after 'em hard now!"

And go after them hard they did, and when Newton, the subsequent batsman, slammed the ball into short center Breen was there as soon as Far-

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rar and could have fielded the ball had not Farrar attended to it. As it was the batsman was satisfied with one base, although the runner ahead reached third in safety.

Tom Haley had begun to warm up back of first base now. That his services would be required was soon evident, for Nostrand put himself in a hole with the next batsman and finally watched him walk to first and fill the bases. Then Dick nodded, Nostrand dropped the ball and walked out and Clearfield cheered lustily as Tom Haley peeled off his sweater. Going into the box with the bases full, even when there are two out, isn't a thing to rejoice and be merry over, but, as Fudge confided to Perry just then, Tom Haley had been put together without nerves. Tom sped some fast and rather wild ones in the general direction of Lanny while the Springdale shortstop leaned on his bat and watched satirically, and the Blue's supporters expressed derision. But none of the Clearfield fellows were worried by Tom's apparent wildness. Tom always did that when he went as a relief pitcher. And then he usually tied the batsman in knots!

Tom did that very thing now. He landed the first ball squarely across the center of the plate. He put the next one shoulder-high across the in-

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ner corner, and he wasted two more in trying to coax the batter to reach out. Then, finding that the blue-stockinged one would not oblige him, he curved his fingers cunningly about the ball and shot it away and, without waiting, swung on his heel and walked out of the box and across the diamond, while Clearfield applauded hysterically and a disgruntled Springdale shortstop tossed his bat down and turned toward the field wondering if he had really hit as much too soon as it had seemed to him!

The Purple went out in order in their half and the seventh inning, which Clearfield, according to time-honored custom, hailed as the "lucky seventh" and stood up for, passed into history without adding further tallies to the score of either team. Springdale went after the game savagely and succeeded in connecting with Haley's offers so frequently that the Clearfield supporters sat on the edges of their seats and writhed anxiously. But, although the Blue's batsmen hit the ball, they failed to "put it where they ain't," and sharp, clean fielding did the rest. For her part, the Purple did no better. One long fly to deep left looked good for a moment, but the nimble-footed player out there got under it without any trouble. No one reached first in either half of the "lucky seventh" and the

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game went into the eighth with the score still 2 to 2.

When the first man had been thrown out, Haley to Merrick, Haley let down a mite and the Springdale right-fielder smashed out a two-bagger that sailed high over Bryan's head and rolled far into the outfield. After that Haley tightened up again and struck out the next candidate, and the half was over a few minutes later when the runner was caught flat-footed off second by a rattling throw-down by Lanny which Bryan took on the run.

Merrick was first up in the last half of the inning and, obeying instructions, hit desperately at the first ball pitched, missed it to the glee of the Springdale "rooters" and staggered back out of the box. The next delivery was low and wide. The next one, too, was a ball. Then came a slow drop, and Gordon, sizing it up nicely, stepped forward and laid his bat gently against it. It wasn't an ideal ball to bunt, but Gordon managed to get his bat a bit over it and at the same moment start for first. The ball trickled but a scant six feet to the left of base, but the catcher overran it slightly and threw low to first and Gordon was safe.

Scott tried hard to sacrifice with a bunt, but Newton kept them almost shoulder-high and before he knew it Scott was in the hole. With the score

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two and one Newton could afford to waste one, and after he had tried the patience of the crowd by repeated efforts to catch Gordon napping at first, he sent in a slow ball that Scott refused. Then, since the batsman had two strikes on him and would naturally not risk an attempt to bunt, Newton tried to end the agony by sending a straight ball waist-high over the outer corner of the plate. Whereupon Scott did exactly what he'd been told to do and laid the ball down very neatly halfway between plate and box and streaked to first. He almost made it, too, but a quick turn and throw by Newton beat him by a foot. Gordon, however, was safely on second, and Clearfield rejoiced loudly.

Cotner continued the bunting game, but although he advanced Gordon to third his bunt went straight to the waiting third-baseman, who had been playing well in, and he made the second out. Warner Jones got a fine round of applause as he stepped to the bat and there were cries of "Give us a home-run, Cap!" "Knock the cover off it!" "Here's where we score!" At third-base Gordon ran back and forth along the path and the coach shouted vociferously, but Newton refused to get rattled. Instead, to the deep disgust of the Clearfield adherents, he pitched four wide balls and

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Warner, tossing aside his bat, walked resentfully to first. Clearfield loudly censured the pitcher, impolitely intimating that he was afraid, but Newton only smiled and gave his attention to Lanny. Four more pitch-outs and Lanny, too, walked, filling the bases and eliciting derisive and disappointed howls from the Purple.

Breen was next at bat and, since in spite of being a left-hander, he had so far failed to solve the Springdale pitcher, the audience expected that Dick would pull him out and substitute a pinch-hitter—probably McCoy or Lewis. But, after a momentary stir at the bench and a quick consultation between Dick and Haley, Breen advanced to the plate, bat in hand. Knowing ones in the stands shook their heads and grumbled, and Fudge emphatically condemned proceedings and became very pessimistic. Perry, daring to hint that perhaps, after all, Dick Lovering had some good reason for allowing Breen to bat, was silenced by exactly four perfectly good arguments against such a possibility. By which time Howard Breen had a ball and a strike on him, the coachers were jumping and shrieking and the purple flags were waving madly while several hundred voices roared out a bedlam of sound. For it was now or never, in the belief of most, and a safe hit was needed very, very badly!

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Breen faced Fortune calmly. Perhaps that misjudgment in right-field—it couldn't be scored as an error, but that didn't take any of the sting out of it for Howard—had put him on his mettle and endowed him with a desperate determination to make atonement. And possibly Dick Lovering was counting on that very thing. At all events Breen came through! With one strike and two balls against him, Breen picked out a wide curve and got it on the middle of his bat. It was a lucky hit, but it did the business. It started over Newton's head, went up and up, curved toward the foul-line and finally landed just out of reach of first- and second-basemen a foot inside the white mark!

And when second-baseman scooped it up Breen was racing across the bag, Gordon had tallied and Warner Jones was just sliding into the plate.

For the succeeding three minutes pandemonium reigned. Purple banners whipped the air, new straw hats were subjected to outrageous treatment and caps sailed gloriously into space. At first-base Bryan was hugging Breen ecstatically and midway between the plate and the pitcher's box a half-dozen Springdale players were holding a rueful conference. When comparative quiet had returned, and after Fudge had saved his face by carefully explaining that Breen's hit had been the

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luckiest fluke that he, Fudge, had ever witnessed in a long and eventful life, the game went on.

Newton for the first time showed nerves. Haley, who was only an average batter at the best, was sent to first after five deliveries. The Clearfield cheering, momentarily stilled, broke forth with renewed vehemence. It was Bryan's turn at bat. Bryan stood disdainfully inert while two bad ones passed him, and then Springdale's relief pitcher, who had been warming up off and on for the last four innings, took the helm and Newton, who had pitched a remarkable game up to the eighth inning, retired to the bench.

The new twirler, Crowell, was a right-hander and was regarded as slightly better than Newton. He took his time about starting to work, but when he finally began he finished the performance neatly enough, causing Bryan to swing at two very poor offerings and then sneaking a fast one over for the third strike.

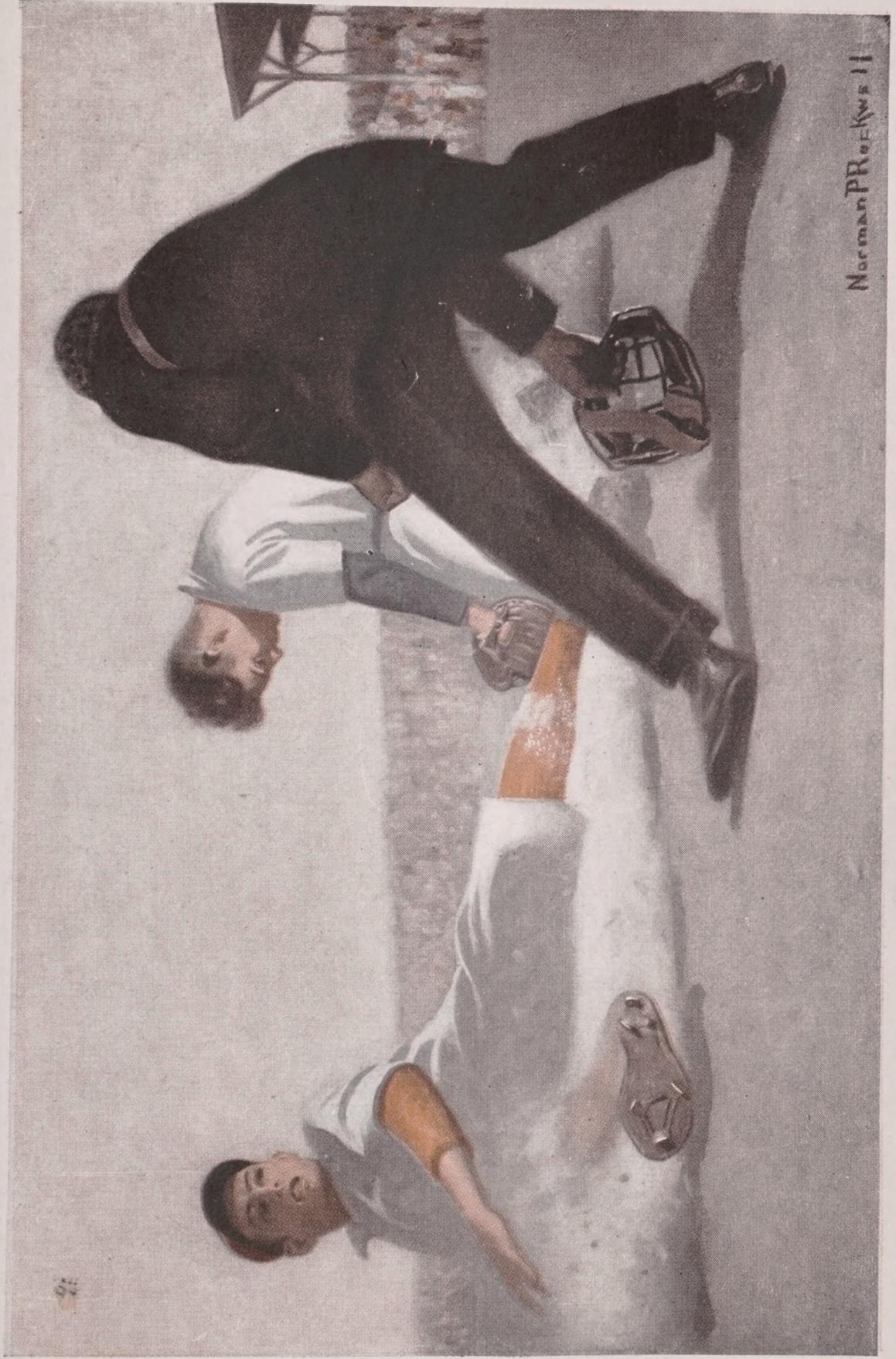
Springdale ought to have realized then and there that she was beaten. Everyone else did, and there ensued the beginning of an exodus from the stands. But those who were on their way out three minutes after the ninth inning began either scuttled back to their seats or sought places along the side of the field.

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The new pitcher had done the unexpected. Far out in the field Farrar and Cotner were chasing back after the rolling ball. Crowell had landed squarely on Haley's first pitch and driven it whizzing past the surprised Captain Jones for three bases! Tom Haley looked about as astounded as he ever allowed himself to look as he walked to the box after backing up Lanny. With none out and a runner on third, victory looked less certain for the Purple. Springdale's "rooters" yelled wildly and triumphantly and Springdale's coaches leaped about like insane acrobats and volleyed all sorts of advice to the lone runner, most of it intended for the pitcher's ears.

"It's a cinch, Johnny! You can walk home in a minute! He's up in the air like a kite! There's nothing to it, old man, there's nothing to it! Here's where we roll 'em up! Watch us score! Hi! Hi! Look at that for a rotten pitch! His arm's broken in two places! Just tap it, Hughie, just tap it! He's all gone now, old man! He hasn't a thing but his glove! Come on now! Let's have it! Right down the alley, Hughie! Pick your place and let her go!"

But Hughie struck out, in spite of all the advice and encouragement supplied him, also the next man up, and Clearfield began to breathe a bit easier.



Norman Rockwell's 11

“Lanny, dropping to his knees on the plate, got it a foot from the ground”

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But the trouble was by no means over, for an in-shoot landed against the ribs of the next batsman and he ambled to first, solicitously rubbing his side and grinning at Tom Haley.

"Sorry," called Tom.

"I'll bet you are!" was the response.

Springdale's center-fielder, second man on her batting list, waited until the runner on first had taken second unchallenged and then lifted a fly to Breen. The latter got it without altering his position and pegged to the plate, but Crowell beat out the throw by a yard and the score was 4 to 3. On the throw-in the batsman went to second and with two out and two on bases the infield spread out again. There was some delay while Springdale selected a pinch-hitter, and then, when he had rubbed his hands in the dirt, rubbed the dirt off on his trousers, gripped his bat and fixed his feet firmly to earth, all with the grim, determined air of an eleventh-hour hero, Lanny stepped to one side of the plate and Tom Haley tossed him four wide ones!

It was the Blue's turn to howl derisively and the Blue did it. And the Purple shouted derisively back. So much, you see, depends on the point of view! The bases were filled now and a hit would not only tie the score but add a second tally to

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Springdale's column. But neither Lanny nor Haley appeared worried, not even when the next batsman appeared in the person of the Blue's captain and third-baseman. Still, Tom worked a bit more deliberately than usual, studied Lanny's signals thoughtfully, seemed bent on consuming as much time as possible. The Blue's captain swayed his bat back and forth and strove to restrain his impatience, but that he was impatient was proved when Tom's first delivery, a ball that Lanny picked almost out of the dirt, fooled him into offering at it. Clearfield shouted joyfully as the bat swept harmlessly above the ball and the men on bases scuttled back. The batsman grew cautious then and let the next two deliveries pass unheeded, guessing them correctly. The noise which had been for some minutes loud and unceasing dwindled to silence as Tom nodded a reply to Lanny's signal, wound up and lurched forward. The Springdale captain expected a good one and recognized it when he saw it. Bat and ball met sharply and he raced down the first base path.

Cries filled the air, the bases emptied. The ball, smashed directly at Tom Haley, bounded out of his glove and rolled back toward the third base line. Tom, momentarily confused, sprang after it, scooped it up from almost under the feet of the

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speeding runner from third and, without a moment's indecision, hurled it to Lanny. And Lanny, dropping to his knees on the plate, got it a foot from the ground just as the spiked shoes of the runner shot into him. Catcher and runner, blue stockings and purple, became confusedly mixed up for a moment, and then Clearfield, seeing the umpire's arm swing backward over his shoulder, burst into triumph and flowed onto the field!

CHAPTER XXIV

CLEARFIELD CONCEDES THE MEET

BUT Clearfield paid dearly for that victory. Late Sunday afternoon four dejected youths sat in the library at Guy Felker's house and waited for the report of Skeet Presser, who had just joined them. Skeet, having stuffed his cloth cap into his pocket, seated himself and smiled about him, but the smile was a dispirited effort.

"Did you see him?" asked Guy.

"Yes, I saw him. Just came from there. He's in bad shape, Cap. He's got two cuts just above his left knee as long as my finger and pretty nearly to the bone. Ugly wounds they are, the doctor says. I didn't see them. He's all bandaged up. Anyway, he's out of it, Guy."

There was a moment's silence. Then:

"Can't run at all, you think?"

"Run! Great Cæsar's Ghost, how could any fellow run with a knee like that? He'll be lucky

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if he's able to catch two weeks from now, I guess."

"Catch!" said Guy bitterly. "Confound his catching! If he hadn't insisted on doing that he wouldn't have been hurt. It's a nice outlook for the Track Team, isn't it? We've got about as much chance to win Saturday as we have of going skating!"

The coach nodded. "That's right," he agreed. "Lanny was good for thirteen points anyway. Well, I don't know. Only thing we can do now is make the best showing possible and——"

"We're not beaten yet," said Harry Partridge. "Kirke's nearly as fast as Lanny in the sprints, isn't he?"

"Nearly, yes," replied Skeet. "But that's not good enough. Springdale's got fellows nearly as fast, too. For that matter, that youngster Hull has been doing some fast work. We may win a first in one of the sprints; I'm not saying we can't. It's the hurdles that worry me most. Lanny was down for both and he'd have run them both if we'd needed him. With Lanny out we've got only Beaton here and Peyton. I'm not throwing off on you, Beaton, but you'll have to dig to beat out Springdale's best man."

"I know," answered the manager, "but, lock

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here, Skeet, if we can win one first in the sprints and get, say, six points out of the hurdles——”

“Oh, don’t be an ass, Arthur,” interrupted Guy crossly. “You can figure until you get writer’s cramp, but that doesn’t alter the fact that we’re dished. As Skeet says, the only thing we can do is to make Springdale work hard for the meet. It’s perfectly rotten luck!”

There was another brief silence. Then Toby Sears asked: “How did Lanny get hurt, anyway? I didn’t see it. I was so excited——”

“Blocked off that runner of theirs at the plate. Someone hit a fierce liner at Haley and he knocked it down and it rolled over toward third base line. When he got it it was too late to peg to first and he chucked it to Lanny about a half-second before the runner got there. Lanny dropped to the plate and the runner slid feet-first into him and his spikes ripped right across Lanny’s knee. It was a mighty pretty piece of blocking, but he ought never to have taken such a chance.” And Partridge shook his head dismally.

“It wouldn’t have hurt anything if they’d taken that old game,” said Guy bitterly. “They had two more to play.”

“Seems to me,” said Sears, “it would be a good plan to keep quiet about Lanny’s trouble. There’s

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no use in letting Springdale know he can't run, is there?"

"I don't see that it matters much whether they know or don't know," said Guy. "They'll find it out Saturday."

"No, Sears is right," said Skeet thoughtfully. "We'll keep it dark. It may disarrange their plans if they find at the last moment that he isn't entered. Did their ball-players know he was hurt badly?"

"No," answered Beaton, "I don't think so. Lanny walked to the bench pretty well. A lot of fellows were with him and I don't believe Springdale noticed anything."

"Then we'll say nothing about it," said Skeet. "The doctor told me he'd be around in a couple of days and Lanny says he'll come out and do all he can for us in the way of coaching. I'm going to get him to take the hurdlers in hand."

"How does Lanny take it?" asked Harry Partridge.

"Not very well just yet. Rather broken-up about it. He told me he would rather have won the sprints than played ball. I wish he'd thought of that before. Still, I don't suppose we can expect the ball team to give up the only first-class catcher they've got to oblige us."

"Maybe," observed Toby Sears, "it's a waste of

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time, fellows, but let's go over the list again and see if we can figure out a win."

"Figure all you like," said the coach as he got up. "I've got to be going, fellows. But when you're through figuring just remember that no meet was ever won with a lead pencil. If you want to win Saturday just make up your minds that you're going to go out there and do about twenty per cent. better than you ever have done. That's the only way you'll win. See you later."

So well was the secret of Lanny's injury kept that few knew of it until his appearance at the field on Tuesday. It had been known that Lanny had been spiked in blocking the plate, but it was not supposed that he had been seriously hurt, and the sight of him swinging a stiff left leg about with the aid of a crutch came as a big surprise. Even then, however, Lanny laughingly denied that he was badly injured. "Just a couple of scratches," he said, "but they make my leg sort of stiff while they're healing. And I don't want to take any chances, you know."

That sounded all right, but by Thursday the truth somehow got out and the school in general, by this time quite enthusiastic over the dual meet, discussed it with dismay and disappointment. With Lanny out of the meet Clearfield had, they

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decided, absolutely no chance of victory, and fellows who had intended to remain at home and view Springdale's defeat on cinders and turf now decided to accompany the baseball team on Saturday. "No good staying around here and seeing Springdale lick the stuffing out of us. Let's go over there and root for the Nine."

Fudge was one who predicted overwhelming defeat for the Purple. He figured it out for Mr. Addicks and Perry one day and proved conclusively that the best possible score for Clearfield was thirty-two points. "And that," explained Fudge, "means that we'll have to get eight points in the hammer-throw."

"Maybe," said Perry, "we'll make a better showing than we expect, Fudge. Mander almost equaled Felker's record at the pole-vault yesterday."

"That's all right," replied Fudge firmly. "I've allowed us six points in the pole-vault. We're going to get licked good and hard. I'm sorry for Guy Felker, too. He's worked pretty hard ever since last year. Remember how he got fellows out in the fall and made them work? Everyone laughed at him then, but if it wasn't for Lanny getting hurt Guy would have shown them something. We'd have won easily if the meet had been last Saturday instead of next."

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"I've seen it happen more than once," observed Mr. Addicks, "that a team with a heavy handicap has gone in and won. Seems like knowing you've *got* to work helps a heap sometimes. Don't give in yet, Fudge."

The last work for the Track Team came Thursday. There had been time-trials for the runners Monday and some pretty strenuous work for all hands on Wednesday, but Thursday's practice was little more than a warming up. Mr. Addicks, however, wasn't in favor of letting down too soon, and on Friday morning Perry was out on the track as usual and was put through his paces quite as vigorously as on any other morning. On Friday afternoon the track men went for a short run across country and that ended the season's work.

While Clearfield still looked for a defeat on the morrow, it no longer conceded the meet to Springdale by any overwhelming majority of points, and there were others beside Arthur Beaton who even dared hope for a victory by a narrow margin. Captain Felker, however, was not one of these. Guy faced the inevitable grimly, determined to at least make a good showing. Lanny worked hard with the coaching and under his tuition the two hurdlers, Beaton and Peyton, showed improvement by Thursday. So far no inkling had reached

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Springdale of Lanny's trouble and his name had been included in the list of Clearfield entrants which was sent to Springdale three days before the meet. Springdale's list included thirty-one names and she had entered at least four fellows in each event. For the sprints and hurdles the number was six. Guy shook his head dismally over that list.

Saturday morning Perry slept late for the first time in many days, and after breakfast went over to Mr. Addicks' rooms and listened to final instructions. He was a little bit jumpy to-day. When Mr. Addicks had delivered the last of his advice he suggested that Perry accompany him across the river and watch him work. "The walk will do you good," he said. "If you get bored you can come back whenever you like."

Fudge came in before they got started and went along. Fudge was about as nervous as a block of wood. He was very full of the impending affair but quite untroubled. The only thing that seemed to really matter to Fudge was his chance of beating Falkland in the hammer-throw. Whether he out-tossed the Springdale fellows apparently failed to bother him. The boys remained with Mr. Addicks until the middle of the morning, and then, extracting a promise from him that he would at-

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tend the meet, they returned across the river and, a little later, witnessed the departure of the ball team for Springdale, doing their share of the cheering as the special trolley-car moved away from the Square. After all, only a small number of fellows accompanied the Nine, most of them, for one reason or another, deciding to stand by the Track Team. Dinner was early to-day and Perry was far from hungry. But Fudge, who had accepted Mrs. Hull's invitation, did full justice to the viands, as observed wonderingly and rather enviously by his host.

The program was to start at two-thirty and long before that the two boys were dressed and waiting. The day was fair and hot, unseasonably hot for so early in June. By a little after two the stands were already well sprinkled with spectators. The Springdale team was late in arriving and it was almost twenty minutes to three when the entrants in the hundred-yards-dash were summoned to the starting line. Perry, who had been restlessly circulating about the field for a half-hour, followed the others with his heart thumping uncomfortably. It suddenly occurred to him that he was about to take part in his first real race, and that his effort was to be witnessed by nearly a thousand persons. He looked across the field and down

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it to the crowded stands, where purple and blue pennants made spots of color in the hot sunlight, and for a moment wished himself far away. Then the names were being called for the first heat and he forgot the watchers. To his relief, he was not summoned. Neither was Lanny. Kirke and Soper were on the track with three Springdale runners when the whistle was blown. There was a minute of silence. Then the starter's voice sounded crisply.

“Ready! . . . Set! . . .”

The pistol barked.

CHAPTER XXV

SPRINGDALE LEADS

G*GO it, Kirke!"*

Perry turned to find Lanny at his elbow, Lanny enveloped in a brown bath-robe and minus his crutch. Then the shouts of the crowd at the finish drew Perry's gaze down the track again as the flying figures crossed the line. From back there it was hard to say who had been placed, but presently, as the sprinters returned, Lanny hurried stiffly to meet Kirke.

"All right, Orson?" called Lanny. Kirke shook his head, smiling and panting.

"I'm out," he answered. "Soper's placed, though. I was fourth."

"Hard luck," said Lanny. "You'll make it in the two-twenty, though." He returned to where Perry was standing. "Funny that Kirke let Soper beat him," he said. "He's been finishing ahead of Soper right along, hasn't he?"

"Yes, but I think Kirke's better in the two-twenty. Are you going to run, Lanny?"

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Lanny pursed his mouth grimly. "I don't believe it will be running, but I'm going to start just for fun."

"But won't it hurt your leg?" asked Perry anxiously.

"Doc says so, but he's an old granny. I won't be able to finish, I guess, but I hate not to have a shot at it."

"Griner!" called the Clerk of the Course. "Stratton! Stratton?"

"Withdrawn," someone answered. The Clerk's pencil went through the name.

"White?"

"Here," replied Lanny as he took his place.

"Powers?"

"All right, sir."

"Hill?"

"That should be Hull, sir," said Lanny.

"Hull?"

"Here, sir," replied Perry, joining the others.

"That's all, then, Mr. Starter. Only four."

"Are you all ready, boys?" asked the starter.

"On your marks! Hold on there, Number 7! Don't try that or you'll get set back. On your marks! . . . Set! . . ."

The pistol banged and the four jumped away. Perry, on the outer side of the straightaway, was in

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his stride the first of the three and, halfway down the track, shot a side-long look at the others. Lanny was not in sight, but the nearer Springdale youth was a yard or so behind and the further one running about even. As the first three were to be placed, Perry slowed up and took it easy, finishing a close third. Half way down the track Lanny was being helped over the strings to the turf. Perry, turning back, heard a timer say laughingly: "Fast time, Jim; ten and four-fifths!" Lanny was seated on the turf ruefully holding his injured knee when Perry reached him.

"I'm sorry, Lanny," he said. "Did you fall?"

"No, I just found I couldn't do it, Perry. How's the track?"

"Fine! Say, I wish Kirke had got placed. They've got four to our two in the final."

"Never mind, you or Soper will get a first. Those chaps aren't fast. Give me a pull up, will you?"

Perry got back into his dressing-gown and joined the throng across the field, at the finish of the 440-yards. Sears, Todd and Cranston lined up for the Purple in the quarter-mile and Springdale placed five runners at the mark, amongst them Davis, the Blue's captain. It was Davis who took the lead at the end of the first hundred yards and, although

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hard-pressed by Toby Sears and a second Springdale runner, kept it to the tape. At the turn Davis was two yards to the good and Sears was leading the third man by a scant two feet. Todd was in fifth place and the other Clearfield entrant in seventh. At the beginning of the stretch Sears gained half the distance separating him from Davis, and until well down the track it looked as if he might get the lead. Davis, however, had plenty of reserve and forty yards from the finish it was evident that Sears had shot his bolt. Davis finished first by three yards and a second Springdale runner ousted Sears from second place almost at the tape. Springdale had made a good start with eight points to Clearfield's one, and the Blue's adherents cheered approvingly.

The high hurdles followed and again Springdale triumphed, getting first and third place. Beaton finished second but was disqualified for upsetting too many hurdles, and Peyton got the honor. The time was eighteenseconds flat and bettered the dual meet record by a fifth of a second.

In the final of the 100-yards dash Perry and Soper were opposed to four wearers of the blue. Perry, digging his holes, tried to recall all the good advice Mr. Addicks had given him, but couldn't remember much of anything. His heart

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was beating very fast and he was as nearly frightened as he had been for a long time. He looked over at Soper, who had drawn the inside lane, and saw that even that more experienced runner was plainly nervous. Then the starter's voice came and Perry settled his toes in the holes, crouched and waited.

“Set!”

Some over-anxious Springdale sprinter leaped away and it had all to be gone through with again. But at last the pistol sounded and Perry, without knowing just how he had got there, found himself well down the track, his legs flying, his arms pumping up and forward and down and back, his lungs working like a pair of bellows and the cries and exhortations of the spectators in his ears. A youth with blue stripes down the seams of his fluttering trunks was a good yard in the lead and Perry, with three others, next. Someone, and Perry silently hoped it wasn't Soper, was no longer in sight. Perry put the last gasp of breath and last ounce of strength into the final twenty yards in a desperate effort to overtake that Springdale runner, but it wasn't until they were almost at the tape that he knew he had gone ahead, and then, as he threw his arms up, a third white-clad figure flashed past!

A half-minute later Perry learned that Soper had

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won and that he had finished in second place by a scant two feet. Soper's time was ten and a fifth. Perry had feared that the form which had flashed to the front at the tape had been that of a Springdale runner and was so relieved that it didn't occur to him until some time later to either regret that he had not finished in first place or congratulate himself on capturing second. But Guy Felker, after hugging Soper, almost wrung Perry's hand off.

"That was bully!" he repeated over and over. "That was bully! We get eight out of it and didn't count on more than four! You're all right, Hull! Better rest up now, boy. Remember the two-twenty's coming. Hello, Lanny! What do you say to that? Wasn't it bully?"

Perry received Lanny's praise and, rather embarrassed, went back for his robe. He wondered if Mr. Addicks had seen him, and he tried to catch sight of that gentleman in the audience. But half the folks were still standing on their feet and shouting and it was no use. He wished Mr. Addicks might have been down here on the field to-day. As he passed the blackboard a boy was writing the new figures down.

"Clearfield, 12; Springdale, 15," was the announcement.

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He tried to figure out how that could be, but was far too excited. When he had wrapped his robe around him he went back to the dressing-room for a rub, crossing the track just ahead of the half-milers who were coming around the turn. He stopped and watched them pass. Todd was running in third place, hugging the rim closely, and Lasker was on his heels. Train was one of a bunch of four who trailed a couple of yards back. Springdale had entered five men to Clearfield's three. Perry missed the finish of the half-mile, but Beaton brought the news into the dressing-room presently. Only Lasker had been placed, winning second. Linn of Springdale had finished first by nearly thirty yards in two minutes, eight and two-fifths seconds. Todd had been in the lead for the whole of the third lap but hadn't been able to keep it. He and Train had been a half-lap behind at the end.

"What's the score now, Arthur?" asked someone.

Beaton shook his head wryly. "Springdale's about twenty-one, I think, to our fifteen. We've got to begin and do something pretty soon. Guy's got first in the high-jump cinched, though. They're almost through."

"How's the shot-put getting on?" Perry asked.

"Not finished yet," replied Beaton. "I guess

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they've got it, though." He hurried out in response to imperative requests for low hurdlers, and Perry followed presently. The 220-yards-hurdle trials had brought out seven entrants and so two preliminary dashes were necessary. Fortunately, perhaps, the two Clearfield candidates, Beaton and Peyton, were not drawn for the same trial. As a result Peyton easily won in his event from three Springdale fellows and Arthur Beaton finished second without hurrying in the next trial. Then the hurdles were quickly lifted aside and the milers began to assemble at the starting point.

Springdale had been conceded this event two weeks ago, but in his last time-trial Smith, of Clearfield, had gone over the course in the commendable time of five minutes and six and two-fifths seconds and the Purple was entertaining a secret hope that Smith might somehow prove too good for the Blue's crack runner. Eight fellows started, three for Clearfield and five for Springdale. The policy of the latter school was evidently to start as many fellows in each event as possible on the chance of displacing a Clearfield entrant. In the present case it was speedily apparent that at least two of Springdale's milers were not expected to finish.

At the end of the first of the four laps the race had settled into two divisions—Smith, Toll and

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Tupper, wearers of the purple C, running well ahead with an equal number of Springdale fellows, and the other two of the Blue's force lagging a hundred yards behind. Wallace, the Springdale hope, was allowing one of his teammates to set the pace and was right on his heels. Two feet behind him trotted Smith, followed by Tupper, a third Springdale runner, and Toll. The six were hugging the rim and watching each other craftily. In that order they passed around the first turn. Then Toll began to go ahead and the challenge was accepted by the third Springdale man. Toll finally ran even with Wallace in the backstretch and on the next turn dropped into the lead.

The half-distance found daylight between Wallace and Smith, and the former pace-maker fell back into fourth place. At the turn Toll began to hit it up. Wallace sped close behind him. Smith came next, some four yards back. Strung out behind Smith were a second blue runner, Tupper, and, dropping back every moment, the last Springdale runner. In that order they came down the straightaway, passed the mark and went doggedly on, to the ringing of the gong announcing the last lap. The stands were shouting confusedly. The leaders passed the two lagging Springdale runners before the turn was begun. As Toll led the way

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into the backstretch it was evident that he was about done for and a rod or two further along Smith fairly leaped into the lead, taking Wallace by surprise. But the three or four yards which he gained were quickly cut down. Tupper closed in on Wallace but could not pass him, and as the next turn was reached began to fall back.

Smith, with Wallace close on his heels, entered the straightaway, running desperately. Behind him, some ten yards back, came a second Springdale man, and, twenty yards or so behind him, Tupper and a third wearer of the blue were fighting it out. For a moment it seemed that Smith might win, but fifty yards from the tape Wallace uncorked a sprint that swept him past Smith and well into the lead, while the next Springdale runner, head back, challenged Smith for second place and slowly closed up the distance between them. Wallace crossed a good six yards ahead and Smith, running now on pure nerve, saw the second blue adversary edge past him a few feet from the line.

Smith staggered as he crossed and fell limply into the outstretched arms of Skeet. Tupper finished fourth, almost as exhausted, and the others trailed in one by one. The pace had been a fast one, the winner's time being caught at five minutes, five and one-fifth seconds, and Smith, finish-

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ing third, had run the distance well under his best record.

By that time the result of the high-jump was being announced, and Clearfield had won first place and halved third. Felker had cleared the bar at five feet and six inches, a Springdale jumper had secured second place with five feet and five and a half inches and Todd had tied with a Springdale fellow at five-feet-four. A moment later the figures showing the score were changed again. With just half the events decided, Clearfield had $21\frac{1}{2}$ points and Springdale $32\frac{1}{2}$.

CHAPTER XXVI

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IT was getting well along toward five o'clock and the sun was sending slanting rays down Brent Field. The two-twenty-dash trials had been run and the final in the low hurdles was just over. In the former Perry, Kirke and Soper had all won places and in the latter Beaton and Peyton had finished first and second and added eight more points to the Clearfield score. The broad-jump and shot-put, too, were over and the Blue had won first and third places in the former and first place in the latter. Partridge had been a good second in the weight event and Brimmer a poor third. In the broad-jump Toby Sears had captured three points. Only the pole-vault, the two-twenty-dash and the hammer-throw remained and the score stood: Clearfield, $36\frac{1}{2}$; Springdale, $44\frac{1}{2}$.

A moment ago the result of the ball game at Springdale had come over the wire and had been announced, and Clearfield was feeling somewhat

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dejected. Springdale had won, 8 to 2. That and the dismal outlook here at the field had caused the purple banners to droop on their staffs. But there was one purple flag that still flaunted itself bravely in the lengthening rays of sunlight. It hung from the railing of the stand on the third base side of the field, a handsome pennant of royal purple with a wreath of green laurel leaves on it enclosing the letters "C. H. S." Behind it sat Louise Brent and a bevy of her companions. The girls were in a quandary. Already several Track Team heroes were tied in the number of points gained by them and the task of awarding the pennant promised to be an extremely difficult one. If Guy Felker won the pole-vault, which was possible at the present stage, the matter would be simplified, for he would then have ten points to his credit, two more than anyone else. The girls discussed the difficulty and referred again and again to the score that Louise was keeping, but without finding a way out of the quandary.

"There's just one thing to do," said Dick Lovering's sister, Grace, finally. "It was understood that the pennant was to go to the boy doing the most for the school, wasn't it?"

The others assented doubtfully. "I suppose that was what was meant," said Louise, "but I thought

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we could give it to someone who had made more points than anyone else and that it would be all quite simple. But with three and maybe four fellows making eight——”

“That’s just it,” said Grace. “We can’t ask them to toss up for it or draw lots, can we? So the best thing to do is to decide after it’s all over which of them really did the best.”

“But how can we decide that?” asked May Burnham. “How are we to know which did the best?”

“We can,” replied Grace convincingly. “Guy and the others will know if we don’t.”

“Guy will have ten points himself if he wins the pole-vault,” said Louise. “That would make it very simple.”

“I don’t believe he’s going to,” said another girl. “He’s just missed that try, and I think that long-legged Springdale boy did it a minute ago.”

“Oh, dear, if he doesn’t!” exclaimed Louise hopelessly. “There, he’s gone and missed it again! No, he hasn’t! He hasn’t! He went over! Oh, *do* you think that makes him win?”

Evidently it didn’t, for while Guy was being congratulated by those around the vaulting standard, the bar was again raised and a boy with a megaphone announced: “The bar is now at ten feet, one and one-half inches!”

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But interest was drawn from the prolonged struggle there to the track. At the beginning of the straightaway they were gathering the contestants in the final of the two-hundred-and-twenty-yards-dash, the last of the track events. Clearfield and Springdale had each placed three men in the trials. For Clearfield these were Perry Hull, Kirke and Soper; for Springdale, Knight, Lawrence and Gedge. The trials had been done in twenty-four and three-fifths and twenty-four and four-fifths, rather slow time, but the final promised to show faster performances. It was figured that if Captain Felker could win five points in the pole-vault and the Purple's sprinters could capture first and second places in the two-twenty, Clearfield might after all squeeze out a victory, for Partridge was counted on to have a very good chance to get the best there was in the hammer-throw, which had been going on for some time in the field across the way. But it was necessary to get eight points in the sprint, as it was reckoned, and there were few who dared hope for such a result. Kirke, it was generally conceded, might possibly win first place, but there were two good runners in the Springdale trio who would certainly make a showing.

Perry drew the fourth lane, with Lawrence of Springdale on his left and Orson Kirke on his

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right. Kirke looked grimly determined and Perry was pretty sure that he meant to win. And, thought Perry, since he had failed in the hundred he really deserved to. But Perry was not yet conceding the race. He had made mistakes in his first race. He had realized it afterwards. Now he meant to profit by what he had learned. He wasn't so frightened this time, either. He had been through the fire.

The crowd about the start drew back to the turf and a whistle shrilled. Down at the finish a handkerchief waved response. The six boys stopped prancing and settled to their places. The starter stepped back.

"On your marks!"

Perry, settling his toes into the cinders, heard the click of the pistol hammer as it was drawn back. There was a sudden silence.

"Set!"

An instant's pause and then the pistol spoke sharply and the race was on. Six lithe, white-clad forms launched themselves forward, twelve arms beat the air and twelve legs twinkled. Three of the six had drawn ahead in the first lunge, Perry and Kirke amongst them. Twenty yards away the field was already strung out. Kirke, running terrifically, was a yard to the good. Perry and Lawrence

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were next. Soper was a yard or so behind them. But that order changed again in the next few seconds. Perry was breasting Kirke then and Lawrence was almost even with them. Soper was making bad going and falling back. The shouts of the crowd in the stands and around the finish made a crashing bedlam of sound that drowned completely the quick *scrunch-scrunch* of the runners' shoes and their hoarse breathing.

Now it was half-distance, and Perry saw the white figure at his right fall back and felt rather than saw another form crawling up and up on the other side near the rim. Lawrence held on, too, and fifty yards from the finish Perry, Lawrence and Gedge were neck-and-neck, with Kirke a single pace behind. Soper and Knight were already beaten. Then Gedge forged ahead and the wild shouts of the Springdale contingent took on new vigor. Cries of "*Clearfield! Clearfield!*" "*Springdale! Springdale!*" filled the air. Dimly, Perry heard his own name over and over.

Now the slim white thread was rushing up the track toward him. He had no sense of moving himself, although his lungs were aching and his arms swung back and forth and his legs, suddenly weighted with lead, still spurned the track. It was as though he, in spite of the painful efforts he was

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making, was standing still and the finish line was racing toward him! For a moment he wondered about Kirke, but for a moment only. The tape was but twenty yards away now and it was time for the last supreme endeavor.

Gedge was two paces in front when Perry started his final rush. In ten yards he was level. In five more he was back with Lawrence. Like a white streak Perry breasted the string, his arms thrown up, his head back, and after him came Gedge and Lawrence, Kirke, Knight and Soper.

Once over the line, Perry staggered, recovered and then fell, rolling limply across the cinders. A dozen eager boys rushed to his assistance and he was lifted and borne to the turf where, a moment later, he found his breath.

"Kirke?" he whispered.

"No," was the answer. "They got second and third. You broke the dual record, Hull; twenty-three and four-fifths!"

Perry considered that an instant in silence. Then: "We lose the meet, though, don't we?"

His informant nodded. "Suppose so. There's still the hammer-throw, but I guess we're dished. It isn't your fault, though. You ran a peach of a race, Hull!"

Perry climbed weakly to his feet, with assist-

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ance, and found that at last he could take a long breath again. "I'm sorry about Kirke," he said rather vaguely.

"Are you?" gasped a voice behind him. "So'm I, but glad you won, Perry!" It was Kirke himself. Perry shook hands with him and then others pushed around for the same purpose; Lawrence and Gedge of Springdale, and Arthur Beaton and Toby Sears and several others, and, finally, Skeet, Skeet with puzzled admiration written large on his thin face.

"I never knew you had it in you, Hull!" he declared, wringing Perry's hand. "Kid, you made a fine finish! I thought it was all over ten yards from the tape, and then, bing!—you left him standing! But don't stay around here and get stiff. Beat it to the shower!"

"Wait! What's the score, please?"

"Oh, they're fifty-two and a half to our forty-six and a half. Cap got first in the pole-vault, but Mander wasn't placed. They've got the meet, all right, but we made 'em fight for it!"

"Fifty-two?" repeated Perry, puzzled. "But don't they have to have more than fifty-four to win?"

"Yes, the hammer-throw isn't finished yet. They'll get three in that, anyhow."

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Perry looked around. The field was already emptying. "I'll get my dressing-gown, I guess," he said.

"All right, but don't stand around too long," said Skeet. "I'm going over to see them finish the hammer. Better luck next year, Hull."

He nodded and joined the throng straggling through the gate. Perry hurried back up the field and found his dressing-gown and then, disregarding Skeet's suggestion, he too followed the crowd to where, on the lot behind the field, it had spread itself in a half-circle around the group of hammer-throwers. Perry wedged himself through to where he could see a little.

"Hello," said a voice at his elbow and he looked up into Lanny's smiling countenance. "You ran a great race, Perry. I wasn't needed to-day after all, was I?" He found Perry's hand and clasped it warmly. "Your time bettered the best I ever made in my life. Next year you'll have them standing on their heads, or I'm a Dutchman!"

"Thanks," murmured Perry. "I guess I wouldn't have beaten you, Lanny, if you'd been there. How—how is this coming out? Is there any chance for us to get the meet?"

"No, I think not. Partridge did a hundred and thirty-one and eight inches, I believe, and no one's

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come near him. But that big chap of theirs will get second, I guess. Fudge Shaw is right after him, though. There's Springdale's last try."

Perry, standing on tip-toe, saw the hammer go flying off, but couldn't see where it landed.

"The worst he's done yet," exclaimed Lanny. "By Jove, I wonder——"

There was a sudden stir of excitement about them. "If Shaw can better his last throw," a voice nearby said, "we may have a chance yet. But he's got to beat a hundred and twenty-four and something!"

"Is Fudge still in it?" asked Perry wonderingly. Lanny nodded.

"Yes, he's been doing well, too. So far he's only six feet behind the Springdale chap, I understand. I only got here about five minutes ago. There's Guy Felker over there with the pennant the girls gave him."

"Oh, did he win it? I'm glad of that. How many points did he make, Lanny?"

"Ten; first in the high-jump and pole-vault. Here goes Harry again."

Partridge walked into the circle, dragging his hammer, and the measurer, far out across the field, scuttled for safety, the yellow tape fluttering behind him. The crowd laughed and then grew

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silent. Partridge spun and the weight went hurtling through the air. But the result failed to equal his best throw.

"Now comes Fudge," whispered Lanny. "Gee, but I wish he might beat that Springdale chap. If we could get second place out of this we'd have the meet!"

"Would we?" asked Perry, startled. "I thought——"

"Eight points would give us fifty-four and a half," said Lanny, "and that would be enough, wouldn't it? Funny Falkland is out of it. I thought he was almost as good as Harry."

Perry, dodging behind the heads and shoulders in front of him, saw Fudge throwing off his dressing-gown and step, a rotund but powerful-looking youth, into the ring. Applause greeted him. Fudge glanced around and was seen to wink gravely at someone in the throng. Then he placed the ball of the hammer at the back of the ring, closed his fingers about the handle and raised his shoulders. Silence fell once more and anxious faces watched as the hammer came off the ground and began to swing, slowly at first and then faster and faster above the whitewashed circle. Fudge's feet sped around, shifting like a dancer's, until he was well toward the front of the ring. Then his

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sturdy young body set suddenly, his hands opened and off shot the flying weight, arching through the air, to come to earth at last far across the sunlit field.

The crowd broke and hurried to cluster about the ring, excited voices speculating eagerly on the distance. Out where the hammer had plowed into the sod the measurer was stooping with the tape. Then:

“All right here!” he called.

A breathless moment followed. Heads bent close above the official as he tautened his end of the tape over the wooden rim.

“One hundred,” announced the judge, “and . . . twenty . . . five feet and . . .”

But what the inches were Perry didn't hear. A wild shout of rejoicing arose from the friends of Clearfield. Fudge had won second place and Clearfield had captured the meet!

After that all was confusion and noise. Perry suddenly found himself shaking hands laughingly with Mr. Addicks, although what the latter said he couldn't hear. Then his attention was attracted to a commotion nearby as the crowd pushed and swayed. On the shoulders of excited, triumphant schoolmates, Fudge, half in and half out of his crimson robe, was being borne past. He espied

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Perry and waved to him, and Perry forced his way through the throng just as Guy Felker reached up and placed the purple pennant in Fudge's hand.

"W-w-w-what's this?" stammered Fudge.

"It's yours, Fudge!" shouted Guy. "You've won the meet and you get the pennant!"

"B-b-but I d-d-didn't w-w-win this, d-d-did I?" gasped Fudge.

"You bet!"

"W-w-well, but wh-wh-why?"

"Because we needed three points to win the meet, you old idiot," laughed Guy, "and you got them for us!"

"And," supplemented a voice that sounded like Curtis Wayland's, "for numerous other reasons!"

And Fudge, borne forward again, waving the purple pennant high in air, had the grace to blush.





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